

Tahlequah Dock

The first account we have of Clam Cove, now known as Tahlequah, comes from Lt. Georges Colvocoresses of the Wilkes American Exploring Expedition whose name was shortened to Colvos by his companions and after whom Colvos passage is named. On the evening of May 10, 1841, when the Expedition anchored at the south end of Vashon, Colvocoresses wrote: "At sunset we came to under the western shore to wait for daylight. It was a rich treat to behold the sublime prospect around us through all its transitions of sunshine, purple hues, mellow twilight, and every shade, until there was nothing else to see but the dark loom of Mts Rainer and Olympus, uplifting themselves against the clear and starry skies of this region."

Settlers began to inhabit Clam Cove in the 1880's and the first ferry began in 1916. Ira Case, who owned the Marjesira Inn at Magnolia, published a newspaper at Burton, and was a State Representative; was a persistent voice for developing the road from Burton to Magnolia in 1925, and then to Tahlequah in 1932.

In 1918 Pierce County built a dock at Point Defiance for a proposed ferry to Gig Harbor and Vashon and received a promise from the King County Commissioners to build a dock and road to south end within one year. On May 15, 1920 the Tahlequah-Point Defiance-Gig Harbor ferry service began with a celebration attended by 300 people. The ferry *City of Tacoma* was the first ferry and the fare was 5 cents.

The Tacoma Chamber of Commerce sponsored a contest with a \$50 Prize to name new terminal. The Prize Committee included M. F. Shaw of Shawnee, Mrs. Pankratz of Burton, and Fanny Sheffield of Southern Heights. They selected Ethel Whitfield, daughter of owners of the Burton Store, as winner for proposing the name Tahlequah after the Oklahoma city which was the Indian Territory capitol of the Cherokee Nation. She thought the word Tah-le-quah meant "water view" or "pleasant water." In actuality, the name more likely comes from the name Chalequa for the Cherokee Tribe, which is found on a 1597 map.

P, Monroe Smock, editor of Vashon Island News-Record read an original poem titled "Vashon Isle" at the opening. Printed in the May 20, 1920 Vashon Island News-Record the poem read in part:

"It's Vashon Isle for ferrys (we believe in them hurrah!)
Spell them fairies after Peter Pan, or call it Tahlequah"

The Skansie brothers from Gig Harbor operated the Tahlequah ferry using the ferry *Skansonia* until the Washington State Ferry System was formed in 1951 and took over operation of the ferry. In 1958 the State Ferry System began a project to rebuild the Tahlequah ferry dock see in this photograph. The “Y” in the dock that separated traffic to the east and west was removed and shore end of the dock was moved to the east creating the curve that distinguishes the dock today. The small passenger shelter sits on the right side of the dock and the ticket taker booth sits on the left. The WSFS Ferry “Olympic is docked as construction takes place.





The current photograph shows the dock in 2009 with the security gate installed after 9/11, a significantly expanded passenger shelter moved to the left side, and expanded storage for ferry equipment on the right. The dock is significantly wider and a walk-on passenger walkway was added on the left side of the dock.

1958 Photograph – Vashon-Maury Island Heritage Association

Current Photograph – Terry Donnelly