

Submerged Cultural Resources Exploration Team

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Exploration Updates

Spring 2006

Issue 1

Welcome to the first issue of *SCRET's* newsletter for 2006. Our goal is to publish the newsletter twice each year. Each issue will focus on *SCRET's* efforts to explore and document significant submerged cultural resources in the Pacific Northwest.

Gas Launch Falcon

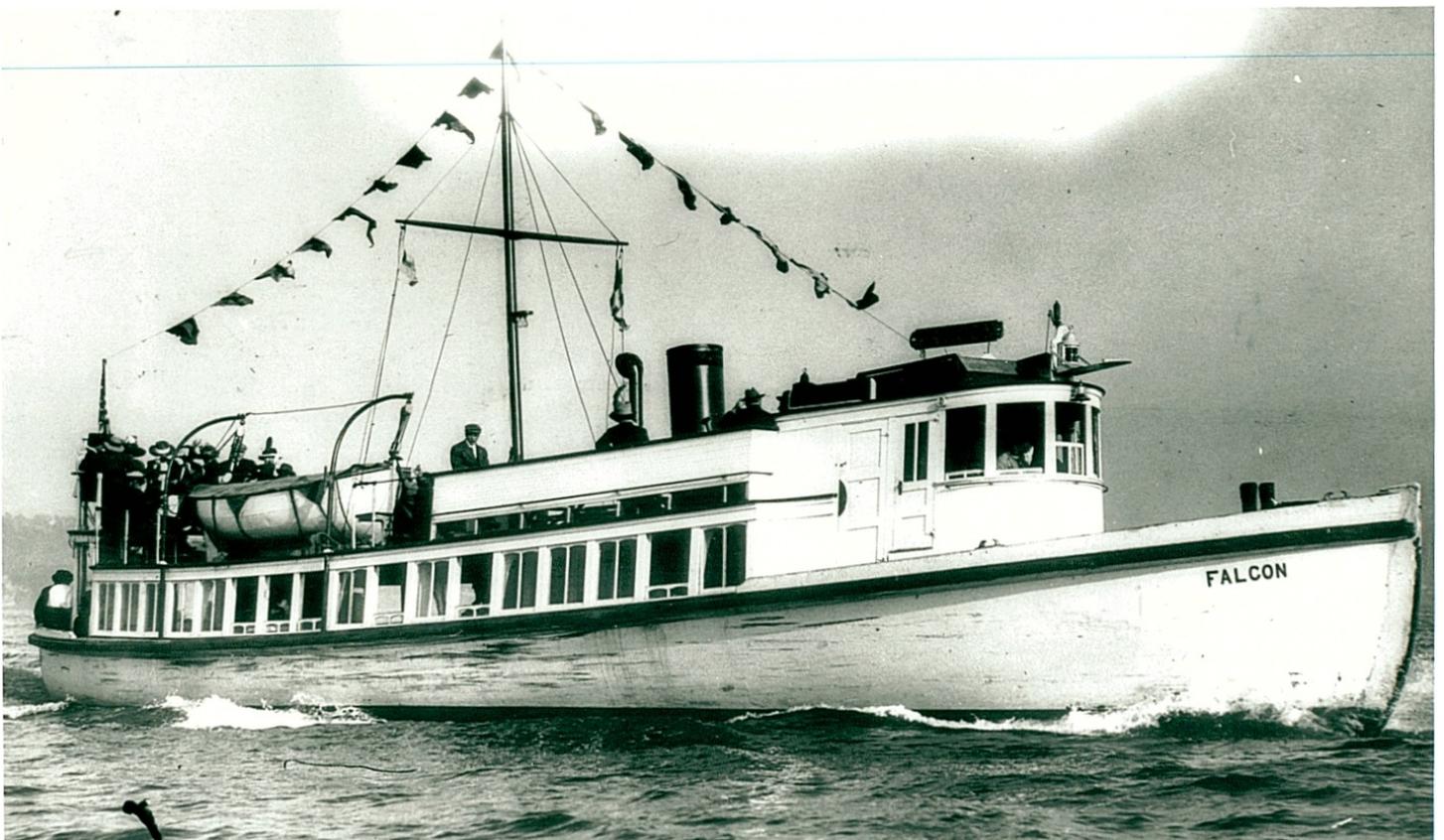
The Falcon was one of the smaller boats in the much fabled Mosquito Fleet. Her history was relatively mellow, and she didn't make much of a fuss.

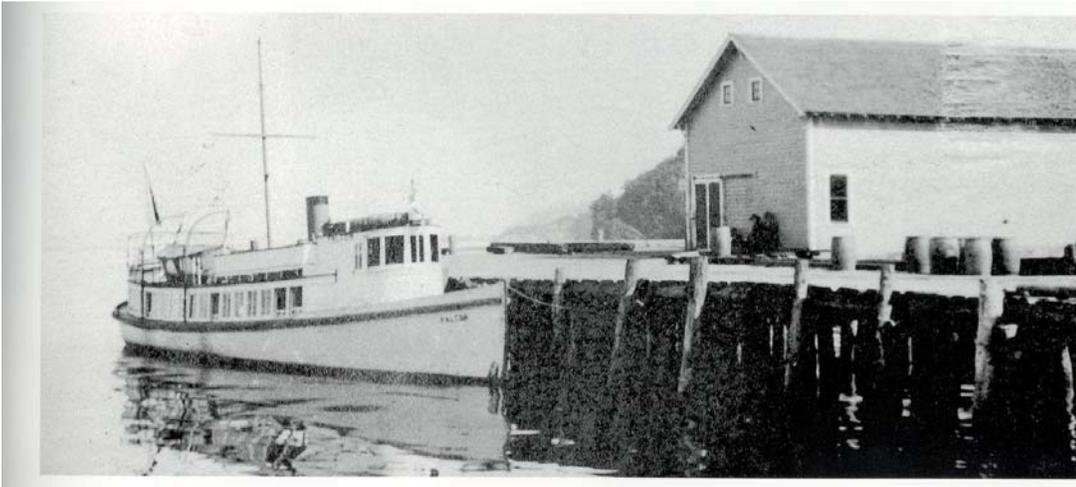
Around the turn of the century (1900), Capt F. E. Lovejoy, his sons, and a few business partners, started the small, mostly family-owned Island Transportation Company to transport passengers and cargo from Whidbey Island - where they lived - to

Everett and Seattle. The Island Transportation Company experienced the boom that built much of the Mosquito Fleet - land transportation was almost non-existent. The Fleet was the main means of communication on Puget Sound during the early 1900s, just as it had been for the last few decades and would continue to be for some time to come.

The Island Transportation Company was fast growing, and in just a couple of years, Lovejoy & Co. built and took over a number of vessels, including the Camano (which was very similar to the Falcon), Calista, Falcon and Fairhaven, and later the semi-diesel freighter Seal, and the passenger steamer Mohawk.

The Falcon was built in 1908. She was designed by L. H. Coolidge, and was built at the time when coal powered steam engines had been replaced by gas,





Falcon at Everett, 1920

but diesels had not yet come to the ships on Puget Sound. The Falcon had a 100 horse power Eastern Standard Engine. She was 85 feet long with a beam of 16 feet, and may have had a displacement of 46 gross tons and 26 net tons and a draft of 4.8 feet. The Falcon was built in Bellingham for the Island Transportation Company route between Anacortes and Bellingham.

The crew on the Island Transportation Company vessels worked long, hard days. The Falcon did not have sleeping accommodations or a galley. The crew had an early breakfast while still on land, a cold lunch with coffee heated directly on the high-pressure cylinder head, and then had dinner again when they got back to port close to midnight.

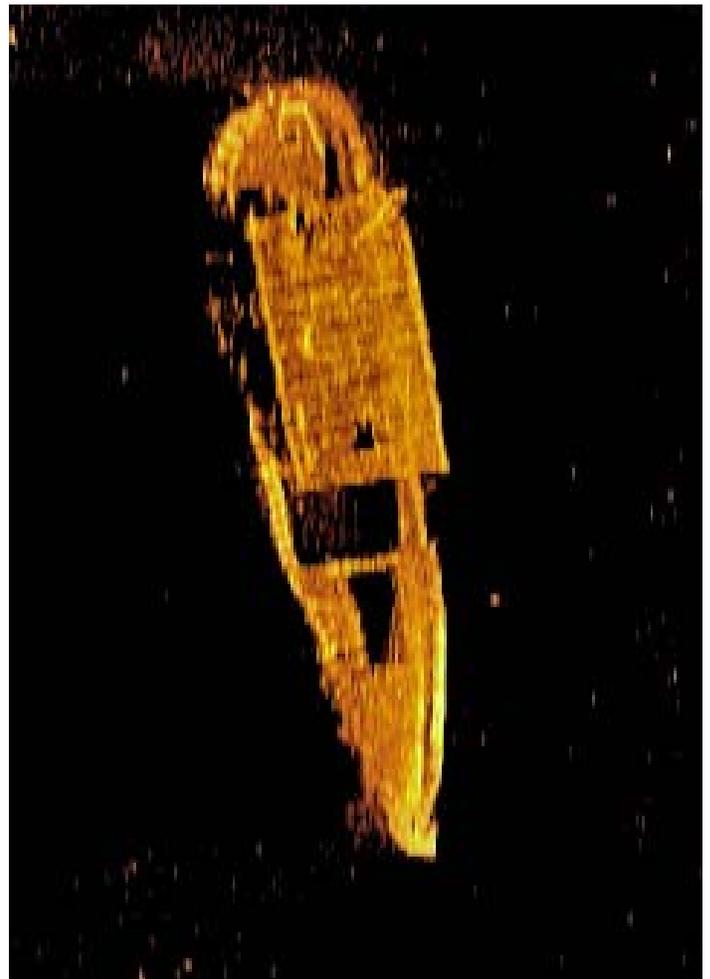
In 1913, the Falcon and her sister ship, Camano (who throughout her history got more attention than the Falcon and had been rebuilt and enlarged at this point in time), were sold to the Kitsap County Transportation Company ("KCTC"). The KCTC was growing rapidly at this time, and would, together with Puget Sound Navigation Company, become the two main competitors in consolidating the Mosquito Fleet. The KCTC later lost the battle to Puget Sound Navigation Company, which went on to become today's state-owned Evergreen Fleet. But in the early 1900's, competition was fierce among the many companies, and KCTC was just beginning to shine. The Mosquito Fleet consisted of 2,500 vessels in 1913, and most of them - just as the Falcon - transported both cargo and passengers at the same time.

In 1918, the Falcon's home harbor was Port Townsend, and she was still owned by the KCTC. Her sister ship, Camano, was no longer with her. The Camano had been sunk by the steamer Sioux while at dock in Everett, raised, refitted, renamed the

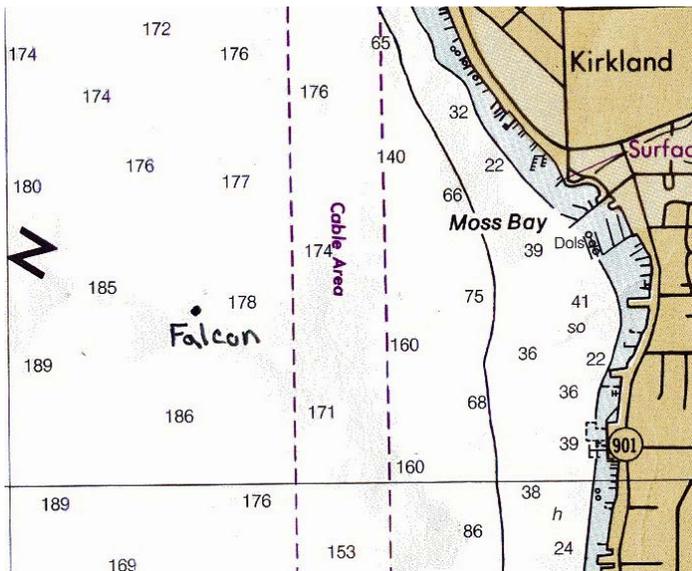
Tolo and then sunk again after a collision in heavy fog with the tug Magic on the Puget Sound on October 5, 1917. The later collision resulted in the death of two women passengers and a Chinese cook.

The post-war era had economic repercussions on the Mosquito Fleet, and the Falcon

left service with the Kitsap County Transportation Company in 1919. She was probably now too small to be profitable on Puget Sound routes. However, the Falcon was of the right size to be able to make money on Lake Washington, and it is likely that at this point, or somewhat later, she entered service on the Lake. The last part of the Falcon's history is still covered in mist and will require further research.



Side Scan Image of Falcon



Location of Falcon Today

The Falcon now rests in 190 feet of water in the middle of Lake Washington. Her remains have been well preserved by the dark, cold waters of the lake. We do not know exactly when or why the Falcon sank. Most likely, when she reached the end of her useful life, she was stripped by her owners and intentionally scuttled.



Bow of Falcon

The hull of the Falcon sits upright on the bottom with a slight list to port. The white paint of her former days is mostly gone. The forward deck is empty.

The Falcon's passenger cabin is intact. The exterior walls and window-frames remain, although the glass is missing from the windows. The doors into the passenger cabin are open and allow access inside. The cabin is generally empty. At the stern, there is a ladder from the stern deck to the top of the passenger cabin. The stairs descend to a curved bench seat in the round stern.



Top view of bow of Falcon



Side view of bow of Falcon



SECRET diver, Mark Tourtellot, ties into window-frame of passenger cabin on dive in May 2005



Exterior wall of passenger cabin showing window frames



SCRET diver, Peo Orvendal, peers into an opening in the floor of the passenger cabin on a dive in April 2006



Stairs from stern deck to top of passenger cabin, with what's left of the railing



Remnants of the paint that once spelled "FALCON" on the outside of the round stern



Curved bench seat around the inside of the round stern



Remains of machinery inside of hull



More pipes, fittings and valves



Drain on main deck



Inside of hull



Rudder and one blade of the Falcon's three blade propeller



Cleat on main deck

Wheelhouse is missing

Unlike the passenger cabin, the wheelhouse that was located immediately forward of the passenger cabin is missing. In the side scan image on page 2, you can see the empty space where the wheelhouse should be. What remains is only a big opening into the hull. The wheelhouse may have floated off when the vessel sank or it may have been removed before the vessel was scuttled.

In her current state, the Falcon is a well-preserved example of a wooden-hull passenger ship from the turn of the century time period. She has much to teach us about the construction of vessels from this time period, as well as the maritime history and culture of the time.

Special thanks to Peo Orvendal for his help with this issue.

Side scan image provided by Inner Space Exploration Team

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I would like to make a financial contribution to *SCRET* – mail to *SCRET*'s address shown below.

I would like to contribute an article to *SCRET*'s next newsletter – e-mail to wjaccard@mindspring.com or mail to *SCRET*'s address shown below.

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