



## Edward Durgan 3RD KEEPER OF THE PATOS LIGHT

By: EDRIE AND TERRI VINSON

When Albert A. Morgan left Patos so that his son Howard might attend school, he simply traded jobs with Edward Durgan, then in charge of the customs house in Port Townsend. Durgan arrived at Patos Island with wife Estelle, and children Clarence, Clara, Estelle, Edwin, Cecil, Rene, Roy, Helene, Thalia, and Lulu. By then, their oldest daughter Mary had married Noah Clark, assistant light keeper at Heceta Head on the wild Oregon Coast. Estelle home schooled their children until they were old enough to be boarded out on the mainland to attend high school.

Durgan spent a good deal of his effort trying to arrange for mail service to Patos. After dogging the superintendent of the post office, Durgan was able to secure mail service for the island in 1908; on October 12, the keeper's logbook records that the "Steamer Elmo of West Sound started carrying mail on this route." Yet Durgan was hardly inactive after this feat. The local newspaper records his many row boat trips to Eastsound, until his assistant Louis A Peterson picked up a motor launch built by Bert Chevalier in Roche Harbor. One such excursion to Eastsound caused quite a stir. L.C. Rudow, a retailer on Harbor Street was charged with having violated the law by



selling goods to the Patos Light Keepers on a Sunday. Those called to testify against him swore they saw not a thing. Although Rudow denied having done so, he went on to say that "he would do so again if he pleased, simply as a matter of accommodation." A jury of his peers took but a moment to find him "not guilty."

That same year, 1908, Patos got a 4th order Fresnel lens and a station make-over with the elevated room to house the light. The

stake, or post light, out front on the western edge of Alden Point was removed at the same time. Patos had entered an era of prestige. The Durgan's daughter Helene further enhanced the fame of this family and their lighthouse when in 1951 she published a book about her childhood there, in *The Light on the Island*.

In 1911 the Durgans left Patos for the more northerly Semiahmoo Harbor Light in Blaine on the border with Canada. It was there in 1919 that Durgan suffered a heart attack and died while attempting to lift his skiff. His wife Estelle continued to keep the harbor light burning, and became an official lighthouse keeper herself, one of six women who served as lighthouse keepers in Washington State. Their son Clarence also became a lighthouse keeper, following in both his parent's footsteps.

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