

HISTORY NOOK

George Louis Lonholt Fourth Keeper of the Patos Light

By: Edrie and Terri Vinson

In 1911 George Lonholt replaced Edward Durgan as Keeper of the Patos Light. Lonholt, who immigrated to the United States from Denmark in 1896, was on the C.P. Patterson a Naval Vessel in the 1900 census. By 1905 he was head keeper of the Five Finger Islands Lighthouse in Alaska. After a short stay at Ediz Hook WA, he was reassigned to Patos. Lonholt's term as a single man on Patos Island was anything but quiet!

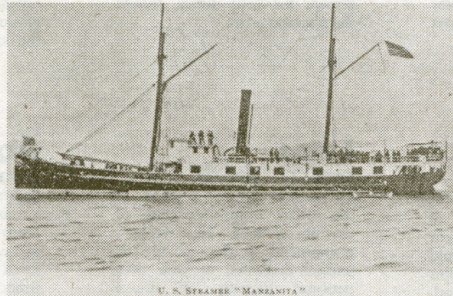
The first disaster was the drowning death of Noah Alexander Clark, his assistant, in December 1911. Then in August of 1912 the William Jolliffe responded to a distress signal only to learn that Lonholt and the assistant William Stark, also a single man, had gotten into an argument, and Lonholt had left for fear of his life. On further inspection by Henry Beck of the Portland Office of the Light House Establishment, Stark was relieved of his station, and Lonholt took up his duty again, for at least another decade. In December of that year Sheriff Boyce went out to Patos to arrest a fisherman who had stolen money belonging to William H. Hicks, his new assistant.

In 1914 the excursion boats began bringing tourists to visit the lighthouse. Between July 12 and August 30 five steamers brought 149 people for him to escort around the premises, and clean

up after they were gone. The following year the excursions began earlier, May 29 through August 15, 259 people on seven boats! He was probably relieved with the visitations stopped during World War I, when the Navy took control of the Lighthouse Service.

Between July 1914 and June 1915, George Lonholt was cited four times for saving lives and property. First he and his assistant Hans F. Jensen helped repair the launch Meteor, and

cared for its five occupants until it could again travel. Next he assisted the yacht Aquilla which was disabled, and furnished shelter and care for the occupants until the engine was repaired. He went to the aid of the Verona of Seattle when it was overtaken by a heavy storm, and cared for its 10



U. S. STEAMER "MANZANITA"

passengers for two days in the Keeper's residence until the storm abated. And, finally the Meteor ran into trouble again, and he kept its captain, engineer, and the wife and two children until a launch came to tow the boat to Anacortes.

Records are spotty for the late 1920s and early 1930s, but we do know that Lonholt was the last Keeper of the Semiahmoo Harbor Light. In 1939 the light and bell were automated, and he retired from the Service, to nearby Ferndale. The WWII draft form he completed showed he was 64, and a retired U.S. Coast Guard Lightkeeper.

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