



## The War Years and Patos Island Lighthouse

By: Edrie and Terri Vinson

The Navy took control of the lighthouses during the wars. With exception of the days following the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor when the entire west coast of the United States went dark, lights came back on at Patos and a few other lights along the Inside Passage to Alaska, guarding that important supply route. Canadian lights remained lit. But the excursion boatloads of 1914 and 1933 era completely stopped. Not all visitation stopped, however, and due to the visit of June and Farrar Burn, probably in 1942, we know a little about life at the lighthouse. In her daily journaling June wrote:

"Instead of the two families we expected to find, four young boys are stationed here. The CO is a 26-year old Indian boy, William E. Moody, from Tulsa, Okla.; the youngest, Paul W. Haltkamp, 20, from Stockport, Iowa,... says he has been longest - too long! at this lonely base. He has been here three months." Most surprisingly, these four men had the Coast Guard cutter bringing provisions from Seattle every week. While all the rest of the country was on food rationing, June was amazed at their grocery order: 107 pounds of various foodstuffs, plus 3 cases of canned food, 6 dozen eggs, 7 loaves of bread, 5 gallons of milk, 3 heads of lettuce and a cured ham!

As a Navy operated base, the Patos crew stood for inspector Ben Wilcox, as reported on by the Seattle Times. The documentation of this inspection gives us an inside glimpse of all the wartime structures, including a lookout tower. This tower actually had a stove inside to keep the watchers warm at night. There were four hour shifts in the tower watching for enemy planes, ships, submarines, and likely incendiary balloons. Of the estimated 9,000 balloons launched by the Japanese, one caused a temporary blackout at the Hanford nuclear weapons plant, and another killed 6 on their way to a church picnic near Bly, Oregon.



As for the enemy submarines, on June 1942 one surfaced and fired over 20 shells at the Estevan Point Lighthouse with its first order Fresnel light. It was the first attack on Canadian soil since the War of 1812. The lighthouse was not damaged, and there being no military presence, the Nootka Indians at Hesquiat Village chased off the sub in their canoes! After that, Canada shut down the lights for the duration of the war.

Following the end of WWII, several groups, including a number of Orcas Island High School students visited Patos to pay their respect, and enjoy a picnic. And in 1949 Mary Durgan Clark Coutts, -- yes she really did marry that handsome Billy Coutts after Noah Clark drowned, -- visited Patos, reliving in her mind the 1893-4 time she spent there as a child, and the 1909-1911 time as Noah's wife. It was on Patos on July 2, 1911 when she first met Billy, then of Neah Bay.

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