

## **JUANITA BEACH PARK HISTORY**

*(courtesy of King County Historic Preservation Program)*

### COMMUNITY HISTORIC CONTEXT

The first residents of Juanita Bay were members of the Duwamish tribe. A winter village with three longhouses called Tahb-tahb-iuh was located near Forbes Creek, a short distance south of Juanita Beach (where Juanita Bay Park is now located). Smallpox killed many of the natives in the mid-nineteen century, and those who remained were removed to reservations. By the time white settlers came to the Juanita area few of the original inhabitants resided in the vicinity. However, the creek on the subject property, known as Juanita Creek, remained a popular location for seasonal collection of wapato, a potato-like tuber important to the Native American diet. Dorr Forbes recounted observing Indians traveling in canoes to the area to collect wapato; this practice evidently continued until 1917, when Lake Washington was lowered. Dorris Beecher Forbes, Dorr Forbes granddaughter, recalled collecting arrowheads on the property as a child.

The area known today as Juanita was initially settled in 1870 by Martin Hubbard, a logger, who established a boat landing that was called Hubbard. By 1880 the area was known as Juanita, after a popular song from the era. Martin Hubbard drowned in Lake Washington May 27, 1887. Dorr and Eliza Forbes arrived in 1877, and several other families followed. By the late 1880s, when Peter Kirk came to establish a steel mill in Kirkland, Juanita included a population of about 150 residents.

### FORBES FAMILY HISTORY

The Forbes family members left a distinctive legacy in Kirkland due to their varied and widespread activities and contributions to the development of the community. A creek, a lake, a road and a park are all named for the family. The Forbes House at Juanita Beach is primarily associated with two generations of the Forbes family, Dorr and Eliza Forbes, their son Leslie Forbes, and his wife, Alicia.

Dorr Forbes was born in Allegheny County, New York, in October 1840. During the Civil War he enlisted in the Thirty-third Regiment Illinois Infantry and was wounded while serving in Missouri. He then became a cattle buyer in the south and later migrated to Iowa, where on January 1, 1874 he married a teacher, Eliza Ann

Wagner. Their first child, Ray was born in Iowa, February 1, 1875, before they moved west by train to Sacramento, California. From California they migrated to Hillsboro, Oregon, where their second son, Leon, was born in 1876. In 1877, they continued on to Seattle, traveling by boat to Kalama, by train to Tacoma and then by boat to Seattle. Their household goods were transported by wagon from the Seattle waterfront to Lake Washington where they traveled by boat to Juanita, still known as Hubbard. Their first house had been transported across the lake from Madison Park and sited at the northwest corner of what is now 116th Avenue NE and NE 100th Street.

In 1878, Dorr Forbes obtained a five-acre, 30-foot wide strip of waterfront land from his neighbor Martin Hubbard, so he could have direct access from the mill to Lake Washington. He established a sawmill near the family home, which proved to be a more profitable enterprise. He dammed the creek to form a log pond near present day 97<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE (Steeves Road) and NE 120<sup>th</sup> Street (Ray R. Forbes Road). After the mill burned in 1894, he operated several other mills in the area and, in retirement, turned to poultry farming. In 1882 Forbes acquired property at what came to be known as Forbes Lake, where they attempted to grow cranberries. However, beaver dams continually interfered with the drainage and destroyed the bogs, so he abandoned the project. In 1889, Dorr Forbes sold his property at Forbes Lake to the Kirkland Land and Improvement Company.

Sometime during the 1880s Forbes built a new family home on what is now Juanita Beach Park. The main house was a symmetrical two story, truncated hipped roof form with a central hall-passage plan, narrow clapboard siding, two-over-two window sash and a hipped one story wing to the rear. This house burned in 1905, at which time Forbes built the initial north wing of the subject house. Dorr Forbes continued to reside at this residence, along with his wife Eliza, until his death on March 28, 1919.

About 1890, when the Kirkland Land and Improvement Company was undertaking industrial, commercial and residential development in Kirkland proper, Dorr Forbes constructed a causeway on piles that connected Juanita with the north end of Market Street in order to allow easy passage to and from the new commercial district. This causeway was approximately where Market Street currently crosses Forbes Creek.

King County constructed a modern pedestrian walkway just to the west, crossing a wetland at Juanita Park.

Eliza Wagner Forbes was an important pioneer in her own right. On January 23, 1887, the citizens of Juanita elected her to the office of Justice of the Peace, the first woman to hold that position in Washington Territory and, quite possibly, the first one west of the Mississippi. However, when Washington gained statehood in 1889, she lost her office, as the state constitution did not allow women to either vote or to hold elective office. She was known as a self-sufficient and fearless woman, who appeared to be well suited to the pioneer life. She lived in the house in Juanita until her death at the age of 93, on April 30, 1942. Her oldest son, Ray Forbes, died the following year on July 8, 1943, at the age of 68.

After settling in Hubbard (Juanita), two more sons were born: Allen on February 18, 1878 and Lloyd Leslie on October 26, 1886. Leslie continued to live at and manage the property after his father's death in 1919. Allen Forbes died October 18, 1929 shipboard on a schooner between Kodiak and Seward, Alaska. In his youth, Leslie worked in shingle mills and lumber camps, including working with his father at a roadhouse near Fairbanks, Alaska that was established by his older brother. Upon his return from Alaska in 1907, Leslie Forbes homesteaded in Lake County, Oregon. He returned to Juanita in 1910 in order to run a lakefront store at the pier near his parents' house. That same year on November 10, he married Alicia Stuart.

Alicia Stuart Forbes was born in San Francisco May 7, 1891; however, she moved with her mother to Seattle in 1894 after the death of her father. She migrated to Houghton in 1907 after her mother married Sherman Stuart, the superintendent of the Anderson Shipyard, Kirkland's major industry. Alicia often walked from Houghton to the dance halls in Juanita, where she met her future husband.

The activities and lives of Leslie and Alicia Forbes are closely tied to the history of Juanita Beach. They initially lived in, and operated, a small confectionery store at the waterfront pier or landing where Lake Washington steamers docked near the senior Forbes' home. However, they were forced to close the store after the Lake Washington Ship Canal opened in 1917 lowering the water level and making the bay too shallow for steamers.

They subsequently lived in the Forbes dance hall that was located at the northwest corner of 97th Avenue Northeast and Juanita Drive, just west of the Forbes residence. This building was destroyed by fire on August 30, 1918 (also destroying the Juanita precinct registration books) and they lived temporarily in a one-room cabin before moving a one-story house across the lake from Seattle. It was sited across from the current park entrance and to the west of the Forbes House. After that house burned down about 1936 the old 1905 Forbes House was expanded and remodeled. Leslie and Alicia Forbes resided in this residence along with his widowed mother, Eliza Forbes.

#### JUANITA BEACH RESORT AND PARK

The lowering of Lake Washington in 1917 had exposed a wide sandy beach, rather than the more typical mudflats adjacent to many other properties. One could walk out in shallow water for nearly a city block. Previously, the lake had extended nearly to the current alignment of Juanita Drive. The public immediately flocked to the new amenity, and Leslie and Alicia took advantage of it. At that time, the Forbes family owned a 30-foot wide strip of waterfront that Dorr Forbes had acquired from Martin Hubbard to provide water access to his mill. Leslie bought this strip of land from his mother and then bought two adjacent strips, giving him about 100 feet of waterfront. Leslie and Alicia then used horses for the arduous task of clearing the beach of numerous logs that remained from the period when the bay had been used for log storage.

The beach area was formally opened to the public in 1921, with a single building, a restroom. They added new buildings and features regularly thereafter, an enlarged bathhouse in 1922, and a plank walkway along the waterfront. In 1923 the Forbes planted 150 cottonwoods, fast-growing trees that would provide shade; many of these trees still stand. They opened a lunch counter and small grocery store in the house they had moved to the site.

In 1925, an open air kitchen was added and in 1928, their largest building, a two-story bathhouse was constructed. It included dressing rooms and showers at the lower level and a dance floor and table area upstairs. An early jukebox provided music for dancing. The bathhouse was a prominent feature of the waterfront until

about 1956, when King County acquired the property for public park purposes and demolished it. During the 1930s as many as 2,000 people a day visited, many traveling from Seattle. For 10 cents a person, one could swim (rent a bathing suit if needed), picnic and enjoy the beach. The resort included a swimming dock and a boathouse for rental of canoes and other small boats. In 1932, the Forbes leased a group of Juanita Beach cabins that adjoined the family owned property on Juanita Bay and operated them on a daily/weekly rental basis. The additional property provided more parking and recreation grounds. Similar resort operations were established on waterfront areas throughout King County during this era.

The resort was operated primarily by Alicia Forbes, with the children (Dorris, Betty, Joyce, Joanne and Dorr II) running the bathhouse on weekends and in the summer. Leslie Forbes helped on weekends, but continued to work as a clerk for a Judge Rhea Whitehead in Seattle as the resort income was not enough for the family to live on.

In 1950 Leslie and Alicia retired to Rockaway Beach on Camano Island, after having run the beach resort for 30 years. They leased the facility to others, but in 1953 had to take it back because of poor maintenance. King County purchased the property in 1956 for \$46,650. The purchase included all the beach property and the uplands, including the Forbes House. The purchase consisted of some 127 feet of waterfront and 225 feet of road frontage; the property was 838 feet deep, with 588 feet above the waterline. Leslie Forbes died in Mount Vernon on October 28, 1968 at age 82, and Alicia Forbes died in Seattle on September 16, 1975 at age 93.

The County subsequently purchased other neighboring beach resorts to enlarge the park area and meet the recreational needs of the community, which had grown rapidly during World War II and after the completion of the Lake Washington floating bridges. These purchases were a result of a long campaign by the Juanita Improvement Club and the Federated Clubs of the East Side, who actively lobbied for public acquisition of waterfront and recreation property. The ownership of Juanita Beach Park including the Dorr and Eliza Forbes House transferred from King County to the City of Kirkland in 2002.

## FORBES HOUSE ARCHITECTURAL/HISTORIC CONTEXT

The original portion of the Dorr and Eliza Forbes House was constructed in 1905, after an earlier family home on the same site, was destroyed by fire. Dorr and Eliza Forbes were early settlers and important figures in local history, who continued to reside in the house until their deaths in 1919 and 1942, respectively. A major addition and remodel occurred in 1936-37, when a side-gable wing was added to the original gable-front wing and the interior was updated. The current interior reflects this remodel and there is little evidence of the earliest interior construction. However, the original 1905 exterior form and finishes remain in place and the 1936-37 addition was designed and constructed in keeping with the vernacular character of the original section.

The wood-frame construction and vernacular design character of the initial wing of the house is typical of domestic designs built in Kirkland between the 1870s and 1920. The 1936-37 construction and interior remodel is associated with revival design styles that were popular in the 1920s and commonly constructed in a minimal traditional mode throughout the 1930s and 1940s. The house was used by King County for various purposes after the property came into public ownership in 1956 and necessitated more recent relatively minor exterior alterations.