

CITY OF  
BAINBRIDGE ISLAND

SEP 21 2012

DEPT OF PLANNING &  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

## **Historical Narrative**

### **The Whalley House**

**10444 NE South Beach Drive**

**Bainbridge Island, Washington 98110**

# The Whalley Residence on South Beach

Submitted by Doug Whalley

The Whalley Family's residence at South Beach, built in 1907 and owned by our family since 1940, is worthy of historical designation for several reasons:

1. **Criteria No. 2: The house embodies the distinctive architectural characteristic of a traditional Craftsman style home popular at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.** The house has not been extensively remodeled. It remains largely as it was designed and built in 1907, with no major external modifications and only modest interior changes. It contains many unique features: back-to-back fireplaces, one in the living room and one on the covered front porch, with a shared chimney; original window panes, now with a "wavy" texture; a steep, winding stairway (with push button light switches); large wooden beam construction; a pull-down flour drawer in the kitchen; a hinged iron fireplace crane to hold cooking pots; and transoms over two doors.
2. **Criteria No. 4: The house represents a special element of the City of Bainbridge Island's cultural history.** During its 105 year existence, the house has almost continuously been used as a weekend and summer residence. Summer residences are relatively rare today, but were once an important part of Bainbridge history.
3. **Criteria No. 5: The house is associated with the lives of persons significant in national, state, and local history.** My grandparents, Arthur and Eleanor Whalley bought property on South Beach in 1906, and acquired the nominated house in about 1940. Along with several other Whalley family members, Arthur and Eleanor participated in the Klondike Gold Rush of 1897, one of the major events in Northwest history. Arthur's brother, John A. Whalley, helped Seattle benefit from the Klondike stampede with his role in publicizing the arrival of gold miners on the Steamer *Portland*. Our Bainbridge house contains our family's Klondike memorabilia.



**The Nominated House** The house I am nominating, shown above, is located at 10444 NE South Beach Drive. When South Beach was first developed in 1906, my grandparents, Arthur and Eleanor Whalley, purchased the lot next door to the current house. They built a small summer cabin on their new property. At the same time, the Marlatt family bought the 2½ acre lot beside the Whalleys, and in 1907 the Marlatts built the house pictured above. In approximately 1940, Arthur and Eleanor Whalley sold their original lot and bought the Marlatt property. Three generations later, the house



remains in our family, now owned by my brother John Whalley and me. Our two families, including children and grandchildren, continue to use it as a summer and weekend residence, just as my parents and grandparents did before us.

**History of Our Family and the Klondike Gold Rush** My grandfather Arthur and his brother, John A. Whalley, moved to Seattle from San Francisco in the early 1890s. In 1897 John was working for the Seattle Post-Intelligencer newspaper. In July of that year, John was visiting relatives in San Francisco when the Steamer *Excelsior* arrived there with miners from Dawson City, Yukon Territory. John spoke with Thomas Libby, a friend from Seattle who arrived on the ship. Libby told him that large quantities of gold had been discovered on Bonanza Creek in the Yukon. John Whalley telegraphed the news to the Post-Intelligencer in Seattle, and the P.I. scooped the nation with the story. (*Memoirs of Arthur Whalley*, attached).

Two days later, the Steamer *Portland* arrived in Seattle with over 100 Yukon miners. Alerted by John Whalley's telegram, P.I. reporters met the ship and wrote that it contained "more than a ton of gold," the famous phrase that is credited with starting the Klondike Gold Rush. The publicity helped Seattle become the major supply center and departure point for prospectors heading to the gold fields.

My grandfather Arthur Whalley was at the pier when the *Portland* arrived. He wrote in his memoirs:

*As a carrier of the Post-Intelligencer morning route, I happened to look out from Queen Anne Hill and saw a strange boat coming into the harbor, so I walked down to [Schwabacher] dock. At the dock was James Hoge, owner, and Sam Westin, business manager, of the Post-Intelligencer. Nearly all the passengers had little baggage but they all carried pokes of gold on their shoulders as they disembarked. All telephoned for hacks and shortly the dock was filled with hacks to carry the miners to the hotel.*

Arthur organized a party of seven men, including his brother James Whalley, and they left for the Klondike in January 1898 on the Steamer *City of Seattle*.



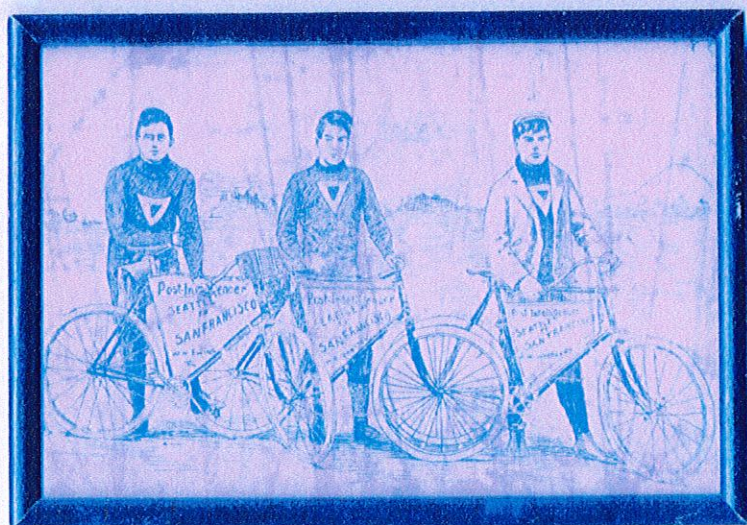


The expedition was funded by Arthur's brother John and their father, Pickering Whalley, who lived in San Francisco. Their original grubstake contract is framed and on the wall at the Bainbridge house. The men landed at Skagway, Alaska, and took a launch to the boom town of Dyea, where Arthur's cousin, Ernest Whalley, was working as a store clerk. There were no rooms available in town, but Ernest let them pitch tents behind his store. From Dyea, the expedition followed the classic route to the Klondike gold fields -- hiking over the Chilkoot Pass (one man turned back when he saw the pass), and building a raft to travel on Lake Bennett and down the Yukon River to Dawson. Another Whalley cousin, Frank, also traveled to Dawson to prospect. Many Klondike photographs of the family are displayed at the Bainbridge house, along with one of Arthur's snow shoes.

Arthur and his companions did not strike it rich. Most of the good claims were taken, and Arthur panned for gold for only a few months. Instead, he worked for the Dawson City News, and later he and Ernest Whalley formed their own newspaper distribution business, Whalley & Co. In 1904 Arthur traveled to San Francisco to marry my grandmother, Eleanor Soper. The two returned to Dawson by the newly-built steam train over White Pass between Skagway and the Yukon Territory, and then traveled by stage coach from Whitehorse to Dawson, a five-day trip. It was 45 degrees below zero when they arrived in Dawson. My grandmother later wrote: *"I've often wondered how my parents felt when their only daughter departed for the wild and rugged Yukon Territory."* (Memoirs of Eleanor Whalley, attached). The Dawson City Museum contains pictures and news articles about the Whalleys, and copies of Arthur's and Eleanor's memoirs.

Arthur and Eleanor returned to Seattle in 1905, and Arthur went to work with his brother in a real estate and insurance business, John A. Whalley & Co. From 1898 to 1962, the company was located in the Colman Building near the Seattle-Bainbridge ferry landing. The company helped develop Seattle's Magnolia neighborhood, and a street there, Whalley Place, is named after John. John was a member of the Washington State Legislature, serving in both houses.

Arthur was one of the "Klondikers" that Pierre Burton interviewed for the definitive Gold Rush book, *Klondike Fever*. He is also mentioned extensively in the book *My Adventures in the Klondike and Alaska* by Walter Starr. In 1908, Arthur and other Seattle-area Klondike veterans formed the Arctic Club, and my parents became members.



1897 Seattle to San Francisco Bicycle Trip

In addition to his participation in the Gold Rush, my grandfather was involved in another interesting event. In 1897, before he traveled to the Yukon, Arthur and two other men rode their bikes from Seattle to San Francisco as part of a Post-Intelligencer promotion. The group sent dispatches to the newspaper – reports from the “wheelmen” – at every stop. The journey took two weeks and Arthur was the only one who made it all the way. This picture hangs in the South Beach house. We also display a large photograph of Arthur with the 1896 Seattle YMCA Track Team.

Six generations of the Whalley Family have spent summers on South Beach – from my great-grandmother in the early 1900s to my grandchildren today. For the past 72 years, family members have enjoyed sitting on the front porch of the



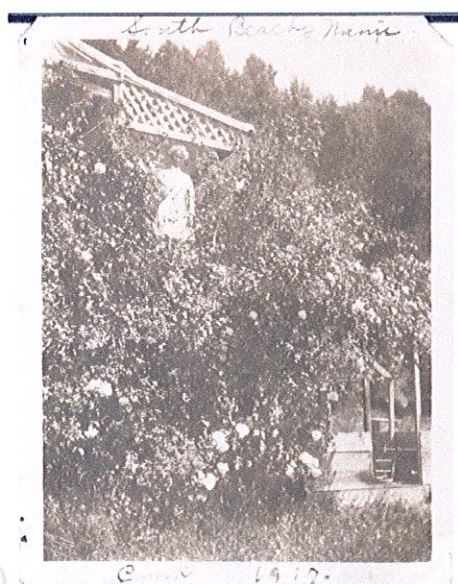
beautiful house, with a fire in the fireplace if it is chilly, watching the boat traffic. The two Bremerton ferries cross directly in front of the property, and we have the best view of Mt. Rainier on the Island. We are very proud that we have been able to maintain the historic house in its original condition, a house we still call "the cabin" because that is what my grandparents called their original South Beach summer home in 1906.





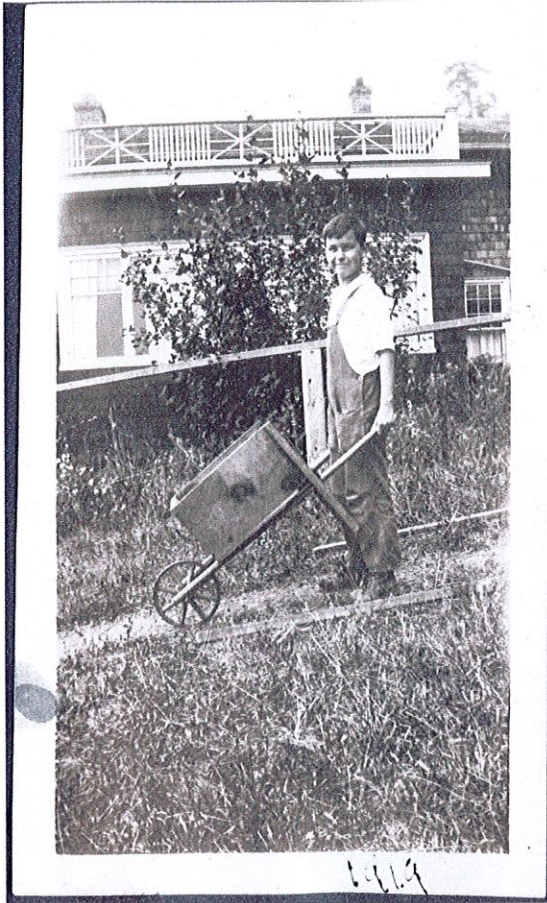






My great grandmother, Olivia Soper, at South Beach in 1917.





*Above:* My father Oliver Whalley with the nominated house behind him, 1919.

*Below:* My grandparents, Arthur and Eleanor Whalley, at the nominated house with family members, 1947.





