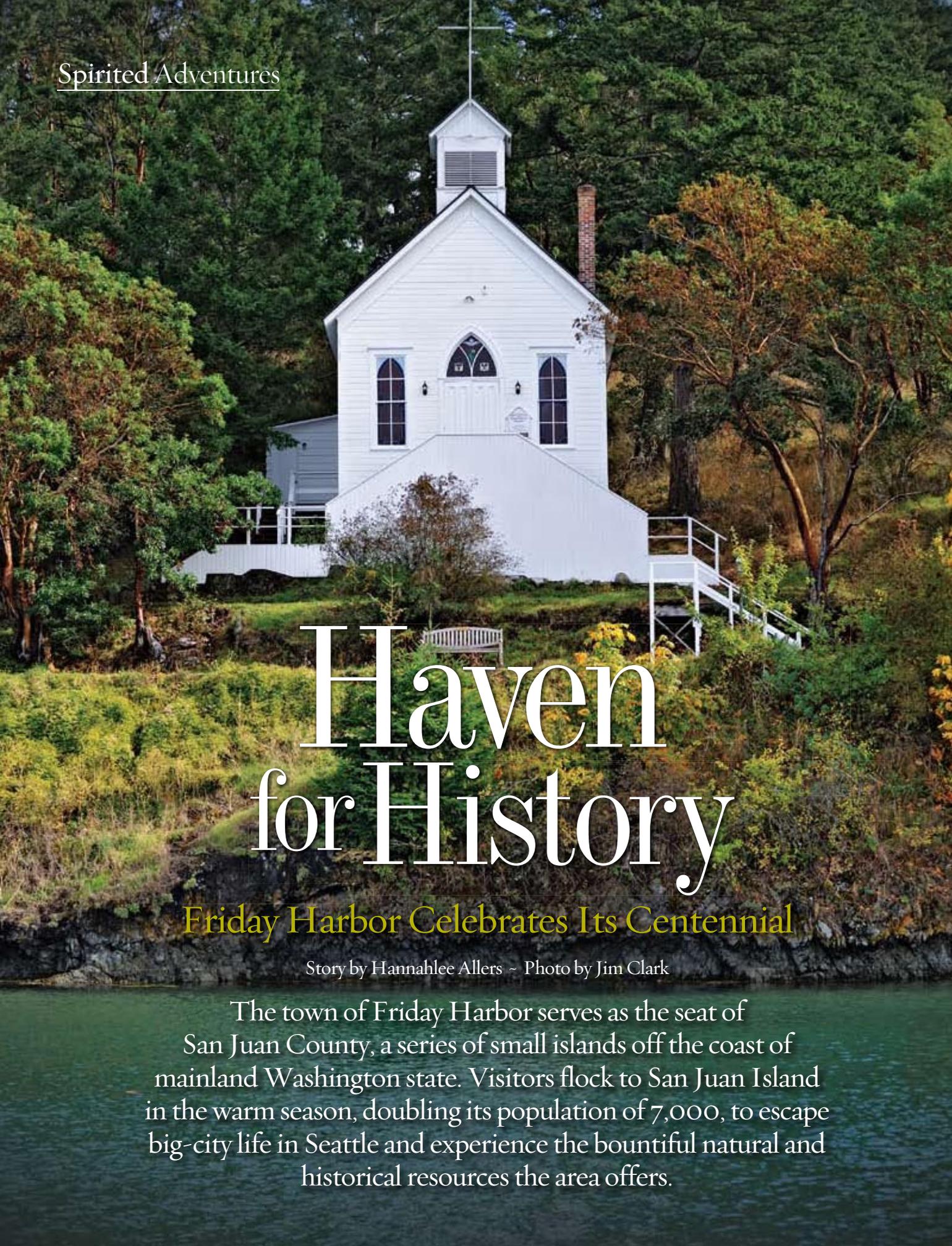


Spirited Adventures



Haven for History

Friday Harbor Celebrates Its Centennial

Story by Hannahlee Allers ~ Photo by Jim Clark

The town of Friday Harbor serves as the seat of San Juan County, a series of small islands off the coast of mainland Washington state. Visitors flock to San Juan Island in the warm season, doubling its population of 7,000, to escape big-city life in Seattle and experience the bountiful natural and historical resources the area offers.



COURTESY OF SAN JUAN ISLAND NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

Left: The U.S. Commanding Officer's house at the American Camp on San Juan Island, circa 1867-1872. Below: The Royal Marine Garrison, pre-1867, in front of the English Camp's barracks.



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here are several theories about how Friday Harbor got its name, but some historians believe the town was named for Joe Friday, a Hawaiian employee of Britain's Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) who tended sheep near the harbor. After a British survey ship in the Salish Sea visited the port, it appeared on an 1859 English chart as Friday's Bay. Officially incorporated in 1909, Friday Harbor celebrates its centennial this year. The town is marking another historic milestone as well: It's been 150 years since the beginning of a war with only one casualty—a British pig.

THE PIG WAR

Abundant resources drew both the HBC and a handful of American immigrants to San Juan Island by the mid-1800s. The Treaty of Oregon was signed in 1846, setting the bound-

ary between the United States and Canada along the 49th parallel. But the language of the treaty was unclear, and tensions arose between immigrants on San Juan. Both countries had growing interests in the islands; the British had commercial interests with HBC, while the United States claimed the island as a part of the Washington Territory established in 1853.

On June 15, 1859, American Lyman Cutlar shot and killed a pig that was grazing in his garden. It belonged to the HBC. British authorities threatened to arrest Cutlar and evict all the Americans as trespassers, driving a group of them to seek military protection. U.S. Captain George E. Pickett and his 64-man infantry unit answered their plea on July 27.

Through the remainder of the summer, both the British and American sides built up their forces. When Washington, D.C., got wind of the

standoff, President James Buchanan dispatched U.S. General Winfield Scott to calm the situation.

Scott arrived in October and through communication with James Douglas, governor of Vancouver Island, convinced both nations to withdraw reinforcements and agree to occupy the area jointly. The agreement lasted until Great Britain and the United States signed the Treaty of Washington in 1871, which referred the decision to Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm I, a neutral figure, who ruled in favor of the United States on October 21, 1872.

EARLY DAYS ON THE ISLAND

San Juan Island National Historical Park houses both the American Camp and English Camp on opposite sides



PHOTO BY GARY BLAKELY, SEATTLETRAVELGRAM.COM

Close to Nature

Can you imagine the thrill of seeing wild orca whales up close? San Juan Outfitters (www.sanjuanislandoutfitters.com) provides kayak tours and whale-watching excursions. Learn more about the amazing mammals beforehand at the Whale Museum in downtown Friday Harbor (www.whalemuseum.org).

If you're not quite comfortable with your sea legs, take in the island's views from the seat of a bicycle (www.islandbicycles.com) or hit one of the local hiking trails. Go to www.sanjuanislandtrails.org for maps and information on hiking and biking in the area.

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of the island. The camps pay tribute to the events of the Pig War, but they are also archeological sites that date back to when the Coast Salish people inhabited the area, around 5,000 years ago.

Many of the Americans who remained on the island after the Pig War were soldiers. Few American women lived on the island, and many men married Native women, who helped them survive in the harsh environment.

“(They) knew the medicinal herbs, how to fish and how to negotiate between the tribes here,” says Sandy Strehlou, historic preservation coordinator for the town of Friday Harbor. “These women helped them understand the culture here. The culture and humanity they brought to the settlements has permeated the island.”

These skills helped sustain islanders until the 1970s and 1980s, when tourism increased in the area and more modern-day amenities were brought to the island.



Built in 1919, Lime Kiln Lighthouse overlooks the coastline that today is part of a whale sanctuary and research station manned by marine mammal scientists. Interpreters are available for history talks.

In the summer, visitors can view wildflowers from the trails at the American Camp while listening to the sounds of orca whales spouting. Dall’s porpoises, minke whales, seals, river otters and a variety of sea birds can also be seen from the park’s shores. To learn more about the park and see a schedule of events, visit www.nps.gov/sajh.

SOAKING UP A SMALL TOWN

Named one of the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s 2008 Distinctive Destinations, Friday Harbor’s history

can best be discovered on foot—visitors can experience historical architecture and small-town culture firsthand with a walking tour through the pedestrian-friendly downtown.

“This is not a museum town,” Strehlou says. “These are buildings that people eat in, sleep in and work in, so we have to take care of them. We take that very seriously, and we’re proud of it.”

As one of a few marine communities in Washington that did not experience a town-raiding fire near the turn of the century, Friday Harbor has been able to maintain many of its structures. The town has more than 150 historic sites, including many turn-of-the-century buildings that are still in use.

The town of Friday Harbor conducts free guided walking tours on Saturdays every May. The San Juan Historical Museum, housed in eight historic buildings, including an 1894 farmhouse and the original San Juan County Jail, has self-guided tour brochures for its grounds and buildings. Each building houses displays of early life on the island. Virtual tours can be viewed at www.sjmuseum.org.

“People often come here for the natural environment, but the history and culture of the place are equal to it,” Strehlou says. “It’s a charming, rural place that still has its identity. It’s got that small-town flavor.”

For more information on Friday Harbor’s centennial commemoration, visit www.historicfridayharbor.org 🍷

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Day Trip It

Hotel de Haro, built in 1886, is in Roche Harbor, on the northern tip of San Juan Island.

WHILE ON THE ISLAND, travel northwest to Roche Harbor. On the half-hour drive, enjoy samples at San Juan Vineyards (www.sanjuanvineyards.com) and stop to see Mona the camel, a fixture on Roche Harbor Road. Stay at the Roche Harbor Resort’s Hotel de Haro, built in 1886 to house limestone traders, with a registry dating back to 1907. Stop by the Sculpture Park at Westcott Bay Reserve to see displays from local artists dispersed throughout the 19-acre wetlands (www.westcottbay.org). For more information, visit www.rocheharbor.com.