

Idaho Panhandle Oral History Project  
Interview with Fred Murphy  
October 27, 1979  
Coeur d'Alene Marina  
Interviewed by David Barton  
Questionnaire Information

FM = Fred Murphy  
DB = David Barton

Tape 23; Side 1

DB: ...a couple of 'em but then we quit. You told me the story about the Sixteen to One Bay, which is pretty interesting. But there are some other names of bays that maybe you could fill me in as to how they got their names, if you can remember. Like...

FM: Let me go back here and see if they have a map up.

DB: OK.

(BREAK IN TAPE)

DB: ...Like Hazel Gale?

FM: Hazel Gale Bay, that's on the south end.

DB: Have you any idea how it was named?

FM: No.

DB: OK. Powder Horn Bay?

FM: Powder Horn Bay. Was, 'cause it's shaped just like...

DB: 'Cause it's shaped like a powder horn.

FM: When we get the map I will clarify it, so you can understand why.

DB: How about Dell Cardo Bay?

FM: Dell Cardo Bay, the name was, as long as I remember the name has been Dell Cardo Bay. I don't know why.

DB: There's Toad Rock, does that look like a toad?

FM: It sure does. That's in, just in between Mica and Dell Cardo.

DB: Was that named since you've been here, or...?

FM: Oh no, that was Toad Rock when I was here. When I first came.

DB: Where...how about Three Mile point?

FM: It's still there and the same three that was there, well I know it's been there over 50 years--hasn't grown hardly any.

DB: Where is the tree?

FM: It leans way out over the point.

DB: Where is it three miles from?

FM: From here.

DB: From here? OK. And Nigger Head?

FM: That's just across, about a mile-and-a-half across from Three Mile Point.

DB: And what does that look like?

FM: It looks like a big nigger's head. That's the reason it was named that. Its a huge rock, they got a house built on top of it now.

DB: How about Lowmeister Bay?  
FM: Well, that's up across from Harrison. And it's still called that. There was an old fellow named Herman Lowmeister. That homesteaded in there. And owned that area.  
DB: Was he around when you were working?  
FM: Oh, yes. He, he and his partner old Lou Schultz, used to sell cordwood for our steamers.  
DB: When was that?  
FM: Oh, the '20s.  
DB: In the '20s. Do you remember when he passed on?  
FM: No. His daughter which had lived on that place for many years. I heard just died last year.  
DB: What period would he have homesteaded that, moved in there?  
FM: I couldn't accurately answer that.  
DB: Aha. How about Shingle Bay, how did that gets its name?  
FM: Well, I know right where it's at, it's across from Conklin Park, and we used to use it for log storage. But how it got to be Shingle Bay...of course, that whole side along there, from Harrison to Shingle, McGarritt, was all a little mess of mills, and that. And, probably there was a big shingle mill over there. Not a big one, but maybe...that's the only thing that I can think of.  
DB: How about English Point, how did that get its name?  
FM: That's on Hayden Lake.  
DB: OK. Do you have any idea how that was named?  
FM: No.  
DB: OK. There's Aberdeen Lodge Bay.  
FM: Yea. Aberdeen Lodge. I'll have to...I won't answer that until we get over there and get a map. I'm not just exactly sure about that.  
DB: OK. How about Valhalla Point?  
FM: Valhalla was homesteaded by the Andersons. About the whole Valhalla area there.  
DB: Is that near Mica?  
FM: It's on the way into Mica. And, one of the granddaughters and her husband still live on the property. On part of, of course, they've sold off lots of property.  
DB: Were they homesteaders?  
FM: They weren't but Alvin Anderson, their dad was. Her dad, She'd, she's, also the author of Sweet Homestead.  
DB: Yea. I've seen that in the library. How about Swede Bay, how did that get...?  
FM: That's it...  
DB: Is that...".  
FM: That's what they called it. Swede Bay. And, there are two names for Swede Bay. In fact, there's three names. When I first started steamboating there, called Calhoun Bay. And then some people by the name, Lindsey's bought it. So they called it Lindsey Bay. Well, Anderson's tried to get it

called Swede Bay. I don't know which it goes by. We can tell when we look at the map.

DB: How about Reynolds point, was there a Reynolds who lived there?

FM: Yes. Yes, let's see, Reynolds. I'd have to go back to the map on that. Ah, I'm confused with one in Mica, now and one up by Harrison. But, I know, I know of a Reynolds Point. And I should know where its got its name.

DB: How about Beedle Point, B-E-E-D-L-E, do you have any idea how that got its name?

FM: Well, that's this side of Conklin Park. It doesn't go by that name. It's right next to Carey Bay there.

DB: Was there a Beedle who lived there?

FM: Jack Beedle, yea. He worked on, he worked on log sorting at the mouth of the St. Joe River. In fact, he was foreman for the St. Joe Boom Company there.

DB: Is that back in the '20s?

FM: Yea, up into the '30s quite a bit, yea.

DB: How did Blue Point get its name?

FM: I don't know. Maybe one of these...so many people buy, and change those names there. I don't know. That's, I'm not familiar with that at all.

DB: Was there a Brown's from Brown's Point?

FM: There was a Brown's Bay.

DB: Was there a family around that you remember?

FM: Ah, well, as I told you the other day, that's where the old moonshiner. He bought the Brown's property.

DB: Was that the man from Virginia?

FM: Yea. From back...ah...West Virginia or somewhere back in that country. And they bought the old Brown's Bay homestead, or farm.

DB: And, Beauty Point, do you think that is named just because it is beautiful?

FM: That's Beauty Bay.

DB: Beauty Bay?

FM: Yes, it is. Very beautiful, that's right over here about eight miles.

DB: Near Wolf's Head Lodge, or Wolf Lodge Bay?

FM: Yea. You can...by driving across the bridge and getting way up on that hill there, there's a viewpoint. You can stop and look right down on Beauty Bay.

DB: I've got a list of steamboats, and I was wondering if you could tell me something distinctive about each of the steamboats if there was any, if you can remember. For instance, the Harrison, what can you remember about the Harrison?

FM: Well, there was about three Harrisons. Ah, I think, one of 'em was a big stern wheeler. And that's the one that I took to three Mile Point and beached, after she burned. Then there was a smaller Harrison that was used as a small

passenger boat, and then there was, I guess another Harrison that I, I'm not too up on.

DB: When did the first two Harrisons run; about what time?

FM: Well, that's before the roads went in--the big Harrison. It'd pick up passengers at Windy Bay, at, at, let's see...what's the hell the name of that? Ah, I'll get it later. The trains would come in from Spokane. I told you this the other day. And they'd get on this big Harrison. They'd go to Harrison, the city Harrison. And cargo and passengers, board the trains. In earlier days it was just a narrow gauge railroad, on those lines. And then they put in a full gauge railroad.

DB: Which lines were those.

FM: Oh, the Coeur d'Alenes.

DB: The Couer d'Alenes?

FM: Hm-hm.

DB: OK. When you said that there weren't any roads, which roads were here?

FM: There were no highways around the lake, at all. That's the reason everybody went by boat.

DB: So, there's no, not even a wagon trail?

FM: No. Hm-hm.

DB: When did the roads first come in around the lake?

FM: Well, they started, they started. They did finally get a little one poked through from here to Wallace. Then, I remember when I was about, maybe 14, 15 years old, they started widening it out. Here to Wallace. I was...and, then later on, after that, when I was steamboating, they started building a road that went around the lake to Harrison. Because I hauled ah, oh, about an 80 ton, big shovel up there. To work on that road.

DB: Is that in the '20s?

FM: Oh, ah...late '20s. Early '30s, somewhere in there. Well, it wasn't middle '30s, because...must 'ave been in the '20s.

DB: When you were a boy around the Coeur d'Alene area, were most of the railroad lines--passenger lines, already in place?

FM: Oh, yea.

DB: OK. So what kind of rail construction was being done when you were young?

FM: Well, as far as I know they were all here.

DB: They were all here?

FM: Except for where they put in a new spur into a mill, or something, you know. To a new mill or something. I think Potlatch was built in '27 or something like that.

DB: When did they put in the road that goes up to Bonners Ferry?

FM: As far as I know, that's been there a long time.

DB: So...

FM: A long time, yea.

DB: So, when you were a boy how...could people get to Bonners Ferry from Coeur d'Alene by a road?

FM: Yes. Yes. You could go from there to Sandpoint. By a road, a gravel road. Just a...and then you had to find a wide spot to turn out. As you pass cars all the time. Just a gravel road. The mud would be that deep in the Spring.

DB: How about roads out to Wallace; it wasn't till the late '20s that they got a road from Coeur d'Alene.

FM: When the first navigable roads went through there, I wouldn't give you any dates, because I wouldn't be sure of it.

DB: Was that when you were a boy, were there roads?

FM: Yes. There was some kind of a road there. And then when I was a young fellow, they started improving them. Widening 'em out, digging them out a little bit.

DB: But around the lake that wasn't till the late '20s that they did that?

FM: I would say so. Middle '20s or something like that. 'Cause I know, it used to, in the early days, take two hours to drive from here to Wallace. It's only about 45 miles.

DB: Would people take the train instead of drive, or?

FM: There was no train from here to Wallace. The only way they could go to Wallace by train is to take off from Spokane. Go that way. Then they'd go across the bridge at Chatcolet and then on up. But that's later, after the passenger boat quit. When we...OW, no Union Pacific. No it was the OW in those days, I guess, OW.

DB: What did that stand for--OW?

FM: Oh, Oregon-Washington an'...I don't know.

FM: Something like that. And then, the Union Pacific, I guess took them over. And the, of course, they, of course, it was 1908 when they built that bridge across the south end of the lake.

DB: Does that bridge have a swing span in it?

FM: Yes. Yes.

DB: What do you remember about the steamer Spokane?

FM: The last one?

DB: Hm-hm.

FM: Well, J.C. White built her. It was supposed to be the most elegant boat that was ever on the lake. And she must have been 115, '20 feet. In that category.

DB: How many before her had been there; how many Spokanes had been before?

FM: At least one. Maybe two. But she was built with two great big twin screw engines. And a big size gas engine. And her propellers were out the side. And in those days they were driving the rivers, full of logs, She just sucked those logs in there and grind them up, and...she had a hell of a time. She just run a short time. And then they tied her up here for, oh God, many, many years. And, I guess during WWI they pulled her engines out and sent them into

the war effort. And, then just put ballast in there to keep her from tipping over. And finally, I took her and towed her out, around over there, this side of the mill and put her on the beach. And that's where she went to pieces. She was an elegant boat. But no good for this lake. Most of the boats here were built about that high off the water, so they could go in on these river docks. Her first deck was as high as that ceiling. They had to build special ramps and everything.

DB: What do you remember about the St. Joe, the last one?  
 FM: She was a 90 footer, I believe, Around that. Had steam. And she had a big set of twin central steam engines in it. A very, very powerful motor.

DB: Well, how many have there been before the last one?  
 FM: I don't know of any other St. Joe.

DB: Just the one St. Joe?  
 FM: There may have been smaller ones or something, before my time. But ah, that's the only one I remember...ah...she was a powerful boat.

DB: How about the Wallace, what do you remember about that boat?  
 FM: Well, I was the last, one of the last people ever on her. She was a passenger boat. About 70 feet long, maybe 80. And ah, steam, of course. The hardest steaming, son of a gun that I ever worked on.

DB: When did it run?  
 FM: It run regular passenger run for years. And then when the passenger run would start dropping off, why once in a while our tug would get a belly ache, or something. We'd have to tie it up for a few days, or a week or two, and we'd take that and work with her.

DB: So, what was about the last year that it ran?  
 FM: Well, I don't think the Wallace was run in 50 years.

DB: How about the Colfax?  
 FM: Only thing I know about the Colfax, is that dad took it in the 1910 Fire to Harrison...ah, to St. Maries. And loaded all the women and children.

DB: Did it run very much after that?  
 FM: I don't know. I couldn't tell you.

DB: How about the Bonnie Doone, what do you remember about that?  
 FM: Well, the Bonnie Doone, was a...almost a sister ship to the Wallace. And the Clipper.

DB: How later did that one run? About how old were you?  
 FM: I was pretty young when they did away with the Bonnie. They tied her up over there, and I'm quite sure the hull is still standing there.

DB: How about the Bonita?  
 FM: The Bonita?  
 DB: The Bonita.  
 FM: I know very little about the Bonita. I've heard my dad talk about it quite a bit.

DB: How about the Torpedo?

FM: I don't know anything about that one.  
DB: OK. The Lorelei?  
FM: Lorelei?  
DB: Lorelei.  
FM: That was just a gas boat, 40 feet long. I, I owned it for years. Until I took her out and sunk her.  
DB: When was that?  
FM: Well, six, seven years ago. She was built in 1905, I think.  
DB: How about the Schelee?  
FM: Schelee?  
DB: Schelee.  
FM: Well, that was a little steamer. I know hardly anything about it. I know one fellow that run it a lot, but I don't know anything about it.  
DB: What was his name?  
FM: I think it was Burt Edwards. He ran the Victor too, I think.  
DB: How about the Miss Spokane? You heard anything about that?  
FM: Well the Miss Spokane is the one that I told you about. That I took out and towed around the hill and put away.  
DB: And Corwein or Corwien?  
FM: Corwein?  
DB: Corwein. That could be.  
FM: I know nothing about it.  
DB: And then did you say that the Edna and the Echo were quite a bit like the Colfax?  
FM: No, I can't say that because I don't...no, I couldn't. I can't verify either one of 'em.  
DB: Well that's the name of the boats that I have.  
XM: In a passenger steamer in the early 1920s how many crew would there be about? What would the various people be?  
FM: Well, like your Clipper, your...now you don't have your radio on there. It was built about the time radios come out, and they named it the Radio. It was a 65 foot steamer. And she ran passenger runs here, for years. You don't have the old Rambler on there. That was a school boat on this lake. The Rambler. That is in its later days. It was a passenger boat, to start with. And then ah...this old Ernie Wicks, he run that. He'd run it about 12, 13 miles up the lake, full of kids. And, bring them in to school and take them back. Then you don't have the Montana there. That was one of the fastest boats on the lake. I have pictures of that. That was one of the first boats my dad run on this lake.  
DB: When did he start running that one?  
FM: Oh, he started here about 1904, '05, something like that.  
DB: So, as Dale asked, how big a crew would a boat like the Montana have?  
FM: Generally three.  
DB: Three?

FM: You'd have an engineer, a skipper and a deck hand. Now, the larger boats, now, like that St. Joe. She carried a cook, she carried two deck hands, a skipper, a fireman, and an engineer.

XM: On the smaller boats did the engineer do his own firing?

FM: Yes. They'd switch off. Now, like on the Montana when we were coming down with a tow, there was three of us. And we'd have four hours on and eight hours off. And ah, then we just, we'd get eight hours pay, I think. And ah, each man would get a chance at firing and crewing the boat.

DB: What were some of the tasks that the men did on the boat, what kind of jobs would they do?

FM: The main thing is keep that boiler full of wood. And keep the boat clean. Keep your decks clean and...

XM: So, a boat would carry nine people of which three would be working at any one time and the others would be sleeping or what?

FM: Well, on the St. Joe, I don't know, she carried about the biggest crew. Some of the passenger boats carried maybe a little more crew 'cause they had freight to unload and then they had a purser and they had a cook, an engineer, and a fireman, and a skipper. But the, the average, the average tug...some of them would carry two linemen, depends on where they were working. If they were working up in the rivers, some of them 70, 80 foot--75 foot tugs, would carry two deck hands, and ah, sometimes a fireman, sometimes not. The skipper.

XM: You mentioned linemen, is this for sounding depths?

FM: No, no. That's the guy that takes care...hooks you on to your booms, and then ties your booms and works out on the logs.

XM: Did you have any like a linesman, or anything like that?

FM: No, no.

DB: What is the depth of this lake?

FM: It varies. I don't think you can find anything over 300 feet. If you can find that much.

DB: When did they start going up the St. Joe River to do the booming? Was that in your father's day?

FM: Yea. I think, I think it was going then. Ah, when I first started here, the St. Joe Boom Company was going full blast. Well, they had four, five boats. I think I can show you a picture of all the boats. It'll be the St. Joe, the St. Maries, the Sampson, the Western. Seems like there is another one there. Maybe it's just the four.

DB: The other day you drew me some pictures of some booms. But did they have different names for different booms?

FM: Yes. Ah, a boom in the lake was generally a big round boom, and that's called a boom. In the river, they take that and they pinch it down to a 100 feet wide and 10 times longer, that's a braile.

DB: That's a braile, like in flying variety?



FM: No. It's just...like they brail logs in the coast or anything. It's just called brail.

DB: How do you spell that?

FM: I don't know.

DB: B-R-A-I-L?

FM: I would settle for that.

DB: OK.

FM: But see, you can't get down all the rivers and through the bridges and stuff with a big boom.

DB: How would they section the logs off to make the brail?

FM: They would tie the booms up along the shore up there wherever they were logging was going. Then we'd start...like the rivers run this way...we'd start down in here. Pinch it in here with a tug boat. And then the lineman would run out there and put a 100 foot line across it. And then we'd come up here about, 75, 80, or 100 feet. Pinch it in again. And keep going like that until we had it all in one straight...I can show you some good pictures of that too.

DB: So, once you got the brail out into the lake how would you separate it out to make it a wide boom--a round boom?

FM: Just...when we start out on the river the lineman would get off of the boat. He'd walk down the tow line he'd go down, he'd start tripping, one side of those lines. And the time we got into the lake it was all pulled out into the big one. Then we'd unhook the tug and come back and pick up all those 100 foot lines. Very smooth operation, that.

DB: Did you go...how far up the St. Joe did you go to pick up logs, to pick up the booms?

FM: Up the St. Joe.

DB: All the way up the St. Joe?

FM: We had...several years we had sorting works up at St. Joe, where we sorted there.

DB: It was at St. Joe?

FM: Yea.

DB: I see. Is there a sorting gap at Dudley?

FM: Ah, there was mills up there, yes. But most of the stuff up there, I think we run clear out of the river and caught at the mouth. And then sorted them in the lake. Out on the Coeur d'Alene river. We had a sorting works at the mouth of the Coeur d'Alene River. Big one. Probably, oh, when we run it full blast, it probably 30, 40 men on it.

DB: How many men were at St. Joe?

FM: Oh, it'd be more than that when they were running.

DB: Did it always seem that the timber that was coming out of the St. Joe was greater in quantity than the timber coming out of the Coeur d'Alene?

FM: Oh, I think. I think a lot more come out of the Joe than out of Coeur d'Alene. Oh, boy we used to...I used to cut off a million to a million and a half feet about every day out of that Coeur d'Alene river. And that's a lot of logs.

DB: How did the steam engines compare to the diesel-electrics in terms of towing power?

FM: Well, we don't have diesel-electric, we just have diesel.

DB: Just diesel?

FM: Well, you put like...now, that old St. Joe, it'd take an awful diesel to out-pull that thing.

DB: How many horsepower could an average steam engine get?

FM: There you got me. I don't know. It'd depend on the steam pressure; the size of your cylinders; size of your cranks.

DB: D'you remember any, just off the top of your head, what kind of horsepower they had?

FM: Well, horsepower actually, didn't rate up too high. But, they spun those big old propellers. Like the average steamboat...some of 'em would turn their propellers over 90 times a minute. That'd be great big paddles you know. Or, on these smaller, higher speed props...boats I have now, they turn up. Well, I got two and three to one reduction on 'em but still they turn a 1,000, 1,150 rpm.

XM: In terms of maintenance and repair are steam engines a lot easier to work with?

FM: Oh yea. Hell, you just...you get a good engineer that'll keep his engine clean and oiled an' you just never had any trouble. Very, very dependable.

DB: What were some of their common breakdowns?

FM: Oh, I...I think I knew of one crankshaft that snapped. But that's because they didn't set it up right to start with.

XM: What kind of pressure did they run the boilers at?

FM: Most that I've been connected with would run from a 120 to 300 pounds.

DB: Do you think that there might be a return to steam?

FM: I think there would be.

XM: Did you have triple expansion engines on these river...ah, lake boats?

FM: Not on the tugs. They were compound, which is double expansion. And ah, there was one or two triple expansions but they were in ah...I think the Victor. I think she had a triple expansion engine. But then, too, she wasn't over that tall, and looked like a truck engine or something.

DB: If steam got going again do you think you'd go back to it?

FM: Oh, I'd love it. I'd love it. Of course, I'm trying to get out of business instead of getting into business.

DB: Well, Coeur d'Alene has grown quite a bit, since you were born in this area...

FM: Oh, God, it's sickening.

DB: What do you think is responsible for that? What events that happened that would have caused that?

FM: Well, it's a damn nice place to live, to start with. Then another thing that the people down in California and stuff, are getting spooky and they like to get up here where it's nice to live. I'll bet you there is 10 to 15 Californians in Coeur d'Alene to one native, right now.

DB: Can you think of any stories or legends about some of the old-time pilots around here, on the lake?

FM: Yea, yea. Dad tells one about...remember the Rambler I told you about, which was a school boat? Well, when it was a more or less, a passenger boat this old Ernie Wicks was the skipper. He's running it alone, of course. And, I've seen some good pictures of these boats over at Temperance. Have you seen them? I think we should go over there because one...there's a card folder, over there, that I can show you some of the beautiful things about the St. Joe River, towing and stuff. I think we should go over there before we go bust.

DB: OK.

FM: But dad tells about coming down the lake one night and it was storming like hell. He was running light. And he thought that he saw something out ahead astern. It was dark. And he pulled over. And here was this old Rambler. And Ernie Wicks was setting there, down in the firehole. Got a lantern in the firebox. Steam was down and the boat was about swamping you know. It was so rough, just broadside. And, he was just stupid drunk. Dad says, "Earnie, you need some help?" "No," he says, "I'll get steam up pretty quick." And he had a lantern sitting in the firehole. He-he.

DB: Ha-ha-ha.

XM: He-he-he.

FM: So, dad hooked on to him and towed him in.

DB: Oh, that's funny.

FM: I know..that I...the other day did I told you about the guy doing in Farragut days out here, that built a little steamer to haul sailors and passengers? Well, he's quite a guy.

DB: About what time period was that?

FM: Well, that was in the '40s; during WW II. And ah, of course he couldn't get gasoline. And he had a boat that...he could haul about 50. And those sailors just died to get down here and take a boat ride. I think he got \$.50 a piece out of 'em. And they had me froze out here. I was towing logs with the old Radio. And furnished by own fuel for \$3.75 an hour. They wouldn't let me haul passengers with it, 'cause they needed the logs towed, which I wanted to do anyway. Well, when they took fuel away from 'im, because it was pleasure, you see. So, he bought a nice little boiler, and a real nice little tandem.

(END OF TAPE 23; Side 1)