THE LEGACY OF THE MERRIMAC
THE YACHT THAT HELPED GUARD THE NORTH COAST AND NEHALEM BAY IN WWII

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Tom Campbell

PRESIDENT
Nan Devlin
VICE PRESIDENT
Rob Borgford
SECRETARY
Eileen Nordquist
BOARD MEMBERS
Carl Whiting
Marie Scovell
Tom Mock
Dana Beck
TREASURER
Will Sonnenfeld
ARCHIVE MANAGERS
Steven Gibson
Mark Kuestner

During her 88 years of navigating the waters of the Pacific Northwest, the Merrimac (originally called the MaryMac), has lived a life of adventure. And she has earned a strong reputation and a legion of admirers.

This elegant 45-foot wooden motor yacht was built by the Astoria Marine Construction Company, using a "kit" from the Bay City (Michigan) Boat Company. The kit, which included all the parts and lumber, was ordered by a well-known yachtsman and past commodore of the Portland Yacht Club, Walter "Mac" McCrea. Joe Dyer, marine architect and owner of Astoria Marine Construction Company, said he would use the kit, but insisted it be built the "Astoria way." He redrew the boat plans and used lumber from a local mill. As a result, Mr. Dyer and his company gained a reputation as master boat builders.

Launched on August 27, 1938, the Merrimac earned the nickname of "The Million Dollar Yacht" because of the quality of craftsmanship and innovative features, such as a shower in the bow, leaded glass bookcases and handcrafted features. And in all these years, the yacht has never undergone a complete renovation and never missed a year of cruising the waters. However, the Merrimac experienced a big career change in WWII (story continues on next page).

Two local connections with the Merrimac

Walter "Mac" McCrea, the original owner of the "MaryMac," is the grandfather of local resident Tom McCallum, and his mother was Mary. Hence the name "MaryMac."

U.S Coast Guard member, Pernal F. Tindel, is the father of Eileen Nordquist, the secretary and longtime volunteer of Nehalem Valley Historical Society. Tindel enlisted the day after the Pearl Harbor attack in 1941, became a Boatswain Mate 1st Class (BM1c), and served on the Merrimac.



The Merrimac - Photo from the Classic Yacht Register

NEHALEM VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY FALL 2026 NEWSLETTER

In 1942, the Merrimac was drafted into the U.S. Coast Guard as a patrol boat. She was painted grey, as were all patrol boats, and outfitted with a 50-caliber machine gun mounted on the foredeck. Stationed in Nehalem Bay, the boat patrolled north coast waters through the end of WWII.

After the war, the Merrimac returned to private life. It was bought by Charlie Weman of Portland and restored to her former glory. Later, Horace Williams, also of Portland, purchased her, then in 1953, Joe Dyer of Astoria took ownership and returned her to local waters. He added a flybridge with his trademark brow over a reconfigured windshield.



The Merrimac, shown above in Nehalem Bay, was painted grey and patrolled north coast waters form 1942-1945. The foredeck was equipped with a 50-caliber machine gun.



In 1971, Jim Stacy, a sawmill and tug boat company owner in Astoria, bought the Merrimac and cruised the waters with her for 23 years, as far north as Alaska. Then in October of 1994, George Beall gave the yacht a much-needed cosmetic facelift and moored it at the Portland Yacht Club. But the Merrimac's story doesn't end there.



Today, the Merrimac rests in a new exhibit at the Columbia River Maritime Museum in Astoria as part of a project that celebrates the maritime history of the Pacific Northwest. Thank you to the builder and owners who took care of her all these years.

It is a fitting legacy for the Merrimac to enjoy a new life in the place of her birth.

You can now renew your NVHS membership or make a donation online - with a credit card!
For memberships:
nehalemvalleyhistory.org/membership-application

For donations:
nehalemvalleyhistory.org/donation

UPCOMING HISTORY EVENTS @ NCRD

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 26
3:30PM - 5:OOPM

"NORTH OREGON COAST TRIBAL HISTORIES & SILETZ CONNECTIONS"

PRESENTED BY ROBERT KENTTA, AFA

The Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians unite more than 27 distinct bands and tribes from an original ancestral homelands area exceeding 20 million acres across western Oregon, southwest Washington, and northern California. Ancestors spoke at least 10 distinct languages across multiple dialects, including Salishan, Athabaskan, Chinookan, and Kalapuyan tongues. Groups such as the Tillamook, Clatsop, and Chinook held deep economic, cultural, and spiritual ties to the northern and central Oregon coast.

Mr. Kentta's archival research helped the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians define their own history and legal status under treaties, legislation, executive orders, and other federal Indian policy, from their own perspective.



Robert Kentta, AFA, is *a member of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians of Shasta and Applegate River Athabaskan (Dakubetede) ancestry. Kentta was the Cultural Resources Director for the Siletz. He is now serving in his 21st year on the Siletz Tribal Council.*

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24
3:30PM - 5:OOPM

"THUNDER GO NORTH: THE HUNT FOR SIR FRANCIS DRAKE'S FAIR & GOOD BAY"

PRESENTED BY MELISSA DARBY, MA

The mysteries surrounding Sir Francis Drake's famous search for a 'Fair and Good Bay' along the West Coast of what eventually became North America was generally thought to be in California. However, comparing Drake's observations of the Natives' houses, dress, foods, language, and lifeways with material collected by early anthropologists, including the plot by a famous University of California historian to manufacture Drake's "plate of brass," refutes the idea of landing the *Golden Hind* on the coast of California, but rather on the Oregon coast. Here, the crew spent between five and ten weeks, interacting with Indians routinely, without ever having fought with them. Ms. Darby will present her research on this fascinating landing by a world-famous ship captain.





Melissa Darby, MA, *is the Senior Archaeologist/ Historian of Lower Columbia Research & Archaeology, LLC, and the author of Thunder Go North: The Hunt for Sir Francis Drake's Fair & Good Bay (cover of book, shown here, depicts Drake circa 1577).*

NEHALEM VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY FALL 2026 NEWSLETTER

IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM TOM CAMPBELL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF NVHS



Our annual meeting will be held on October 29 at 3:30 at the Pine Grove Community House. We will host an ice cream social and have a brief program. It should be a good time, and I hope that you will come join us. I haven't secured the speaker yet, so keep your eyes peeled for that announcement. This is the time that we reflect on our accomplishments of the past year and chart our path forward in the upcoming year.

Our accomplishments are many. Our programs always get rave reviews. We have speakers come from other places but also feature our own people. In February, Mark Beach along with a host of locals reminded us of that historic flood of 1996. We heard about the Seaside Riots and had our own rabble-rousers in the crowd.

We welcomed two new board members to our leadership team a little more than a year ago and their impact is being felt. Dana Beck and Will Sonnenfeld really strengthened our cast.

We awarded our first Bell Family Memorial Scholarship at Neahkahnie High and plan to continue to recognize another worthy senior like Kash Lorinz, this year's recipient. Our outreach has continued to widen. We are working closely with the Clatsop-Nehalem Confederated Tribes and have reached out to leadership at Siletz. We are working hand-in-glove with the Maritime Archeological Society and presented a program with them in June. The archivist at the Oregon Historical Society was our speaker in July. We continue to participate with the Tillamook Coast History Alliance.

One really cool thing that we are working on is to identify historic buildings in the area. As Manzanita finalized its comprehensive plan, it included a passage from the Oregon Historic Sites Database that stated that the only standing historic building in Manzanita as the Pine Grove. We had some contact with the OHSD administrators and discovered that their information was over 50 years old and inaccurate. We have forms for registering historic buildings and have started to register buildings throughout the Nehalem Valley.

On the negative side, our membership renewal numbers dropped drastically this year. Needless to say, we survive on the dues paid and the donations we receive. We have done well with grants, but they only carry us over for a short time. One way to increase membership is to offer exclusive benefits. I offer a discussion group, via Zoom for members only, on the history of our local indigenous people. Our next meeting will be October 22. Your support is critical both financially and on a volunteer basis. Please join and find out how much fun membership in NVHS can be.

225 LANEDA AVE.
PO BOX 704
MANZANITA OR 97130
HOURS: SATURDAYS, 1-4PM
OR BY APPOINTMENT
DOCENTS WILL BE THERE
TO GREET YOU

NEHALEMVALLEYHISTORY.ORG
INFO@NEHALEMVALLEYHISTORY.ORG

FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK:
NEHALEM VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

DONATE ONLINE AT:
NEHALEMVALLEYHISTORY.ORG/DONATION/

Volume 2, Issue 4, Fall 2026

NVHS is a 501c3 nonprofit dedicated to preserving the history of the Nehalem Valley