

## Journey of the Elwha

Beach Lake is a natural low area that is filled with brackish water as a result of infiltration from water from the Strait of Juan de Fuca. The property is at the northernmost tip of Angeles Point and about one mile east of the mouth of the Elwha River. The Elwha River flows northward out of the Olympic Mountains and enters the Strait of Juan de Fuca a few miles west of Port Angeles, Washington. At the mouth of the river, a coastal lowland valley formed from periodic flooding and channel migration of the Elwha River. Beach Lake formed as a remnant river channel that was cut off from the main river. The beach strand is active, with erosion and depositional episodes observed over the past 100 years.

*Beach Lake Cabin after storm surge in 1950s. (Courtesy of National Archives Pacific Alaska Region.)*



The shoreline is ever changing, as the geologic history of the Elwha River Valley illustrates. The river has moved and the shape of the peninsula has changed. The Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe have lived along the river's changing form for centuries.

In the 1950s, the shoreline was armored with rip rap and concrete to combat erosion. But, upstream dams on the Elwha River rendered these efforts a failure. Today, the shoreline is being restored by a series of projects led by the Coastal Watershed Institute, along with Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office, Puget Sound Partnership, the Lower Elwha Tribe, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

*Learn more at: [www.coastalwatershedinstitute.org](http://www.coastalwatershedinstitute.org)*

The Phillips cabin was built close to the shoreline, which put it in harm's way. Because of the changing landscape, moving the cabin was necessary. The cabin was slated for demolition, but instead was moved to the neighboring property where it will serve a new family.

*The North Olympic History Center is a 501(c)(3) non-profit and donations are tax-deductible. Please consider supporting the NOHC with a contribution or membership:*

North Olympic History Center  
931 W. 9th Street- Lincoln School  
PO Box 1327  
Port Angeles, WA 98362  
360-452-2662

*Strait of Juan de Fuca  
from Angeles Point*

[www.clallamhistoricalsociety.com](http://www.clallamhistoricalsociety.com)

*cover: Beach Lake Cabin prior to being moved*

This brochure was developed with funding from the US Fish and Wildlife Service

# THE PHILLIPS FAMILY'S BEACH LAKE CABIN

## A RETREAT ON THE EDGE



North Olympic History Center



*We connect the future, through the present, with the past*

*Beach Lake Cabin 1940s*



### SOLID COMFORT

Mr. and Mrs. B. N. Phillips have "built a fireplace and put a house around it." Still as enthusiastic as they were during the construction, Mr. and Mrs. Phillips have moved bag and baggage and are now residing at their new summer home at Beachlake. The new house is a charming, low shake-covered building with bright red shutters and a hospitable Dutch door. One entire end of the spacious living room is devoted to the fireplace, large enough to crawl into comfortably. Constructed of limestone, the fireplace goes way up to the roof of the beamed ceiling on the inside. The comfortable crackle of burning driftwood mingles with the dull roar of the surf just a few yards away making an ideal atmosphere for a summer evening. Beachlake is on the lower Elwha.

A SUMMER "COOLER"

*The Evening News, Port Angeles, 1936*

### Ben Phillips Comes to Town

The 1890s to 1910s was a period of growth for Port Angeles with logging and shipping providing jobs. Improvements in roads, schools, and infrastructure were soon to follow. Yet, financial services to support these improvements were inconsistent and problematic at this time.

In 1914, at the age of 26, Benjamin N. Phillips arrived in Port Angeles with his young bride, Isabel and opened the Port Angeles Trust and Savings Bank on North Laurel Street. It was immediately successful and soon merged with other banks to become the First National Bank of Port Angeles. Phillips finally retired from banking in 1976 at the age of 88. His long career and ethical conduct helped the community grow into the commercial hub it is today.

### A Family Retreat

By the mid-1930s the Phillips' were prospering and purchased a 70-acre farm in the Lower Elwha River valley, with beach frontage views of the Strait of Juan de Fuca. The land included a brackish water lake. The lake was sometimes stocked with trout for fishing and was often the scene for swimming and paddling rafts,

canoes, or dinghys. Beach combing amidst the ever-changing driftwood along the shore was a consistent source of pleasure for the family and their guests. Construction of a cabin soon followed.

Benjamin and Isabel and their son James spent every summer at the cabin entertaining family and friends, sometimes welcoming more than 100 guests at annual picnics for various groups. The annual 4th of July family gathering would ultimately be attended by six generations of the Phillips family.

*Family members and friends at Beach Lake*



### The Phillips' Legacy

The couple was actively involved with philanthropic and social activities and played leadership roles in many of the groups in which they participated. Their long and committed involvement in the life of the region is an important part of the story of the Olympic Peninsula as highlighted below.



*Ben and Isabel*

*Ben:*

- Port Angeles Trust & Savings Bank - founder, 1914
- Klahhane (hiking) Club - founder and first president, 1915
- Port Angeles Public Library - trustee, 1927-51
- American Banker's Assn. - executive council, 1939-42
- Washington Banker's Assn. - president, 1944-45
- Port Angeles Community Concert Assn. - president for twelve years
- Port Angeles Rotary Club - charter member and president
- Port Angeles Chamber of Commerce - president
- United Good Neighbors of Clallam County - president, 1961
- Elks Lodge, Odd Fellows, Moose Lodge, Peninsula Golf and Country Club, Port Angeles Yacht Club - member
- United Methodist and Congregational Church - chairman of finance committee
- Rainier Club of Seattle - member
- Coast Guard Auxiliary - made a life member, 1961
- YMCA - honored for service to youth

*Isabel:*

- Port Angeles Public Library - board member
- Several area clubs - member