

## Chronology and Change Over Time: Fishing History Timeline

The *sx̣ʷəbabš*, the Swift Water People, band of the Puyallup Tribe live at *tx̣ʷaalqəł*, the Place Where Game Exists (Gig Harbor). They fish in the bay, collect shellfish on the shore, hunt and gather in the forests and fields, and get fresh water from the creeks that empty into the harbor.

The British Vancouver Expedition explores Puget Sound.

**Time Immemorial**

**1792**



The English Hudson's Bay Company establishes Fort Nisqually near what is now DuPont, Washington.

**1833**

The American Wilkes Expedition explores and names Gig Harbor.

**1841**

Territorial Governor Isaac Stevens forces the local tribes to sign treaties, granting the United States vast territories, railroad companies rights of way through the land, and the tribes three reservations and fishing rights. This leads to the Puget Sound War or Indian Wars of 1855 – 1856. A number of Native families remain in the Gig Harbor area.

**1854**

1862 – The Homestead Act takes Western land and gives it to white settlers willing to farm. A flood of people start to come west.	1867-1869 – Three immigrant fishermen from Croatia and Spain, Samuel Jerisich, John Farrugue, and Peter Goldsmith, settle in Gig Harbor. Most of the settlers who follow them from Europe also work as fishermen.	The first transcontinental railroad finishes stretching across the country, making it easier to move goods and people.	1871 – Sam Jerisich opens a dogfish oil operation on the first dock in Gig Harbor.	Fish canneries spring up on the shorelines and rivers of Washington Territory. The wild salmon population rapidly declines.	1888 – Gig Harbor Lumber Company opens. Logs rafts fill the harbor and lumber sails around the world.	The first salmon hatchery in Washington opens on the Kalama River.
<b>1862</b>	<b>1867-69</b>	<b>1870s</b>	<b>1871</b>	<b>1870s – 1880s</b>	<b>1888</b>	<b>1895</b>



1902 – The Skansie brothers start building fishing boats with motors in Gig Harbor. Two more boat-building companies follow in the harbor. Their boats fish from California to Alaska.	1903 – Edmund Smith of Seattle introduces his fish cutting and cleaning machine, replacing the work done by previously done by hand.	Fishermen's Terminal in Seattle opens as the home port for the Puget Sound-based fishing fleet and remains so to this day.	The Skansie brothers produce some of the first car ferries as well as continue to build fishing boats (such as the <i>Shenandoah</i> , on display at the Harbor History Museum).	Boats out of Gig Harbor fish for salmon in the San Juan Islands or Alaska or catch sardines or herring along the Pacific coast. This continues to the present.	Boat building in Gig Harbor becomes a major industry. They mostly produce fishing vessels and ferries.
<b>1902</b>	<b>1903</b>	<b>1914</b>	<b>1920s</b>	<b>1920s</b>	<b>1930s</b>

**20<sup>th</sup> Century** – The State and Federal governments dam rivers across Washington for hydroelectric power and water control, destroying salmon habitat and preventing Native tribal members from fishing in their traditional ways.

<p>The City of Gig Harbor encloses Donkey Creek to create Harborview Drive. The creek is forced through a three-foot pipe. Salmon have a hard time returning to spawn.</p>	<p>Mario Puratić, an immigrant to the US from Croatia, patents his invention, the Puretic power block. This mechanized winch revolutionizes purse seine fishing because it replaces the backbreaking work of pulling the net full of fish out of the water. The purse seine fishing boats out of Gig Harbor now only need five crew members, instead of ten.</p>	<p>1950s-1960s – The fishing industry peaks in Gig Harbor with approximately 40 boats in the fleet.</p> <p>1962 – Alaska limits purse seine fishing boats to 58 feet long, meaning that many boats from Gig Harbor can no longer fish there because they are too long. They switch to fishing for salmon in the San Juan Islands or get shorter boats.</p>	<p>1970s – The boat building industry in Gig Harbor transitions to building recreational boats.</p> <p>1974 – The Boldt Decision determines that the Native tribes of WA are due half of all fish caught in their traditional areas. Tribal members form the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission. Also, The Gig Harbor Commercial Fishermen’s Club creates a salmon hatchery at Donkey Creek.</p>		
<p><b>1949</b></p>	<p><b>1953</b></p>	<p><b>1950s – 1960s</b></p>	<p><b>1962</b></p>	<p><b>1970s</b></p>	<p><b>1974</b></p>



<p>There are about 30 fishing vessels working out of Gig Harbor. Many skippers (captains) keep their boats in Alaska rather than make the journey back and forth.</p>	<p>The sockeye salmon is listed as an endangered species. Thirteen more Washington salmon species will be added to the list over the years.</p>	<p>2013 – The City of Gig Harbor restores the portion of Donkey Creek behind the Harbor History Museum.</p> <p>2016 – The tribes of WA win a court case that determines that the State must fix all of its culverts that block salmon.</p> <p>2017 – The seafood harvested from Oregon to the North Pacific has a value of \$545 million. The government heavily regulates the industry.</p>	<p>2019 – By this year, the State of Washington has removed thirty-three dams, opening rivers to fish habitat.</p> <p>2020 – More than 70% of endangered or threatened salmon and steelhead species in Washington are not meeting recovery goals or are “in crisis.”</p> <p>2021 – Twelve to fifteen Gig Harbor fishing boats head to Alaska to fish. They have a very successful year after the past two disappointing years.</p>				
<p><b>1988</b></p>	<p><b>1991</b></p>	<p><b>2013</b></p>	<p><b>2016</b></p>	<p><b>2017</b></p>	<p><b>2019</b></p>	<p><b>2020</b></p>	<p><b>2021</b></p>

**20<sup>th</sup> Century** – Habitat destruction from development and pollution devastate the Washington salmon population.