

Sam and Anna Jerisich: From Far Away to a Home on the Bay

Images and ephemera from the Harbor History Museum collection



HARBOR HISTORY MUSEUM

1
Certificate of Marriage

Samuel Guissich and Annie
were by me joined in marriage under
license of Geo. B. Kandle Co. Auditor Pierce
Co. Wash. Ter. on the twentieth day of
October 1881.

Dated Artondale this 21st day of Oct. 1881

Geo. Ferguson
Justice of Peace

Witnesses

John Ferigo
John Hays

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Justice of Peace

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John Hays

Washington Territory Marriage Certificate of Samuel
and Anna Jerisich (Jerisich is misspelled on certificate)

Object ID: 2019.021.069

Harbor History Museum Collection



“First Slavonian salmon fishermen.” Around 1889. Jerisich home at left, Johny Jerisich in stern of Peter Skansi’s boat in foreground. Object ID: 2017.020.035 Harbor History Museum Collection



Sam and Anna with their children (except Caroline), 1901. Back: Michael, John, Samuel Jr., Peter Skansi. Front: Katherine, Julia, Anna, Samuel, Melissa Jerisich Skansi with baby Julia, Mary. Object ID: 2009.003.016 Harbor History Museum Collection



Original Jeresich and Farrague
land claims over present-day
Gig Harbor.
Greg Spadoni, 2018



Joseph and Caroline (Jerisich) Dorotich Family. L-R: Catherine, George, Amanda (married M. Skansie), Jack, John, Clemma (married Novakovich), Mattie (married N. Skansi), Ann (married J. Skansie). Object ID: 2001.063.050 Harbor History Museum Collection



John Jerisich and wife, Maude Stella Jerisich.

6663

MARRIAGE RETURN

This blank to be filled out by the minister or officer performing the marriage ceremony and returned to the County Auditor of the county in which the marriage took place within five days from the date of the marriage:

1 Date of license 9 Sept. 1905
2 Full name of groom John Jerisich
3 Age last birthday 33
4 Color (a) dark Half breed
5 No. of groom's marriages 1st
6 Residence Gig Harbor Wash.
7 Birthplace (b) Gig Harbor
8 Occupation Fisherman
9 Father's name Samuel Jerisich
10 Mother's maiden name Anna Husman
11 Full name of bride Maude Stella
Maiden name if a widow _____
12 Age last birthday 22
13 Color (a) fair White
14 No. of bride's marriages _____
15 Residence Tacoma Wash.
16 Birthplace (b) Bozeman Montana
17 Occupation House work
18 Father's name Edward Stella
19 Mother's maiden name Emilie Baedisch
20 Date of marriage 10 Sept 1905
21 Place of marriage Gig Harbor
22 By whom married and official station Rev. A. J. McNamee
23 Names of witnesses and their residences:
No. 1 Lee Ma Korich
No. 2 Nick Gosden

NOTE—(a) State color distinctly, so race may be known as White, Black, Mulatto, Indian, Chinese, Mixed White and Indian, etc.
(b) Give state or foreign country, so nationality is plainly shown.

Filed Sept. 12 - 1905

Marriage return certificate of John and Maude, 1905
Object ID: 2019.021.072
Harbor History Museum Collection



Anna Jerisich, her granddaughter Anna Jerisich (McCarthy), daughter of John and Maude, and Anna's daughter Julia Jerisich Van Waters, around 1910. The photo is labeled incorrectly. Harbor History Museum Collection

Proclamation

WHEREAS:The Town of Gig Harbor, Washington has a colorful and historical past and a bright and progressive future;

WHEREAS:Recognition of the founders of the Town of Gig Harbor have not received due recognition for their pioneering spirit;

WHEREAS: The Town of Gig Harbor, assisted by the Gig Harbor Rotary Club, has set aside a park and flagpole with United States of America flag, and a suitable monument has been constructed;

I, Jack D. Bujacich, Jr., Mayor of the Town of Gig Harbor, Washington, do hereby set aside Thursday, November 11, 1976, as Jerisich Day and encourage all citizens to attend the dedication of Jerisich Park at 10 a.m. in honor of Samuel Jerisich and his founding of the Town of Gig Harbor.

Jack D. Bujacich, Jr.,
Mayor

Attest:
Don Avery,
Town Clerk

Mini Park to Be Dedicated To First Gig Harbor Family



Samuel Jerisich, who arrived in what is now Gig Harbor in 1867, is pictured with his family in the above 1901 photograph. The family members, left to right, standing: Michael, John, Samuel, Jr., and Peter Skansi. Seated: Katherine, Julia, Mother Anna, Father Samuel, Melissa (Mrs. Skansi holding Julia) and Mary. Julia later married Sprio Babich and lives in Gig Harbor. Thursday has been proclaimed Jerisich Day by Mayor Jack Bujacich, Jr., and the park at the foot of Rosedale Street is to be dedicated to Samuel Jerisich in a ceremony starting at 10 a.m.

Perpetual recognition to the founder of Gig Harbor is to be made Thursday morning with the dedication of Jerisich Park. The dedication is to take place at the park located at the foot of Rosedale Street with Mayor Jack Bujacich making the official dedication for the Town of Gig Harbor.

A grandson and grand-

daughters of the founder, Sam Jerisich, are to be present. Several Gig Harbor pioneers are also expected to attend the ceremony.

Sam Jerisich, a Dalmatian sailor turned fisherman, came to America on several voyages and after making three trips around the horn, left the sea and located in San Francisco. Seeking further adventure,

he moved north to Vancouver Island where he could work at his fishing trade more profitably.

In 1867, Jerisich and fishing partners, John Farragut and Peter Goldsmith, set out in their flat-bottomed fishing boat to row into the Puget Sound to find a new location. During a gale off of Pt. Defiance they

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Mini Park to Be Dedicated

Continued from Page 1
rowed into Gig Harbor for protection from the storm.

They were impressed with the beauty of the harbor and shoreline and decided to settle just inside the sandspit at the mouth of the harbor. They built log houses for shelter there only to be advised by the government that they would have to vacate the property as it was military land. They moved across the harbor and established permanent homes.

Jerisich brought his wife, Annie, and a daughter from Vancouver Island to become the first family in Gig Harbor. On homesteaded land, Jerisich built a seven-room house and several cottages on the beach. Lumber was brought to Gig Harbor by fishing boat from Olympia. Tacoma did not exist and supplies were purchased from the Hudson Bay

Company store at Ft. Nisqually and transported by row boat to Gig Harbor.

Jerisich was a fisherman and found a market for his fish in Steilacoom and Olympia where he would row his boat to deliver his cargo. He was a progressive man in a new country and built the first dock in Gig Harbor upon which he built a rendering plant to extract dogfish oil. It brought \$1.00 per gallon.

Sam and Annie Jerisich reared a family of eight, three boys and five girls. Michael and Samuel, Jr., passed away in their 20's as did Melissa and Mary. Sam, who was born in Kotor, Yugoslavia, in 1833, passed away in the town he founded on Dec. 23, 1905, at the age of 72.

Mrs. Jerisich, a full-blooded Indian from Vancouver Island, was a wonderful woman, according to stories of her accomplishments passed down through pioneer generations. She used her native skills combined with hard manual work to provide for her family and readily learned many homemaking arts from white women in the small settlement. She was an accomplished weaver and made clothes for her family from the cloth she had made. She also acted as mid-wife and nurse in the community.

She took her place in society and community affairs and was highly respected for her activities. She passed away in 1926.

After a few years other young fishermen came to Gig Harbor. Caroline, the oldest girl, married Joe Dorotich. Melissa became Mrs. Peter Skansie and Julia married Mark Van Waters and resided in Seattle and Gig Harbor. Catherine married Peter Sellen, a wholesale fisherman.

The Skansie's daughter, Julia, married Sprio Babich and resides in Gig Harbor.

John Jerisich was the only son to survive the rigors of early Gig Harbor life. He followed in his father's wake and became a fisherman. He married Maude Stella and their family of two sons and two daughters grew up in Gig Harbor. Bill Jerisich, a fisherman, passed away in 1960. Mike is a retired Pierce County operating engineer.

Margaret married Emery Simpson and lives in Richland. Anna married Cornelius McCarthy and resides in Portland.

John, a fisherman, worked in the off-seasons at the Skansie shipyards. He was an expert hull finisher and, with tools he made himself, finished many of the hulls built in the yard. He was drowned in a ferry boat accident in 1935 at the age of 63.

Mike Jerisich and his sisters will be present at the dedication of Jerisich Park on Thursday. The park will carry the Jerisich name into history and is located on land that Sam Jerisich knew well as did many of the Yugoslav fishermen who followed him to picturesque Gig Harbor.

Article regarding the Jerisich family and the dedication of Jerisich Park, 1976

Note: Not all of the details are accurate. Also, today it is Jerisich Dock and Skansie Park.

Object ID: 2019.021.005

Harbor History Museum Collection



Mary Jerisich's blouse (possibly made by Anna), a basket made by Anna, and Samuel's pocket watch, on display at the Harbor History Museum. You can see Mary wearing this blouse in the family portrait on the fourth slide.