

ELEMENTARY ESSAY #4

For thousands of years, people living on Lake Washington have used its waters in their daily lives. In the last 150 years, the methods of crossing the lake to transport goods and people from one side to another have changed greatly.

First Peoples who lived in this area traveled in canoes carved from

cedar logs. They used their canoes to fish, hunt, visit friends and family, and conduct trade with other tribes. When the first settlers arrived, they found it very helpful that the Native people had canoes and were willing to help them move their families

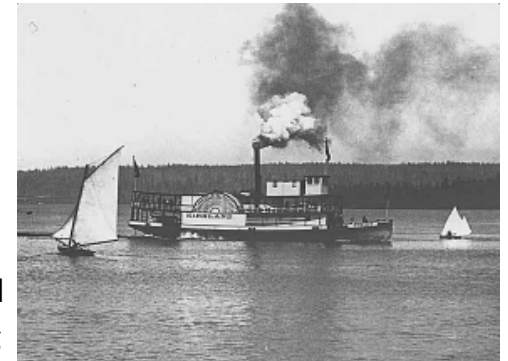


Indians in Canoe, ca 1911 [Courtesy Museum of History & Industry](#)

and belongings to hard-to-reach home sites. The Native people also helped them to access distant markets and resources. But settlers soon found they needed larger and sturdier boats, so they built flat-bottom boats called scows to move their belongings and transport their produce. Even so, settlers in isolated areas were rarely able to see their neighbors and families because of the limited transportation options.

Most scows did not have engines, so crossing the lake in them was hard and slow. Steamer ships were designed to carry more people

and freight in a safer and quicker manner. Soon the lake was crowded with steamers moving back and forth between neighborhood landings and docks. These ships were called a “Mosquito Fleet” because they looked like a swarm of insects skimming across the water. Slow-moving ferries that carried passengers and their vehicles also helped to improve transportation across the lake.



Boat Kirkland on Lake Washington, ca 1905. [Courtesy Museum of History & Industry](#)



Aerial view of Evergreen Point Floating Bridge, March 1963. [Courtesy Museum of History & Industry](#)

As more people began to use cars and trucks, the need for bridges across the lake grew. Bridges would allow individuals to drive from one side of the lake to the other to reach their homes or businesses much more quickly than taking a ferry or driving around the lake. Bridges allowed industries that were based on the east side of Lake Washington to move their products to the seaport in Seattle more economically. As the population east of the lake grew many new homes were built in towns like Bellevue and Kirkland.

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This essay was developed using facts and terminology from the following HistoryLink.org essays:

- **10185** Woodin family crosses Lake Washington to homestead on Squak Slough (later called Sammamish River) in September 1871.
- **10179** The steam scow Squak begins ferrying passengers across Lake Washington in 1884.

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Economically: using the least amount of money possible

Ferry: a large boat that carries vehicles as well as passengers

Freight: goods to be shipped

Produce : fresh fruits and vegetables, eggs, and butter produced on a farm

Scow: a flat-bottomed boat that usually is rowed or poled

Steamer: a ship that is powered by a steam engine