

The Captain William R. Ballard Award

Ballard, Washington acquired the name it has carried proudly since 1888 as the consequence of a chance flip of a coin, together with an 1880's train stop.

William Rankin Ballard, the namesake of the town that was established on Salmon Bay came from Oregon in 1858 at the age of eleven. He attended school in Roseburg, Oregon and at the Washington Territorial University in Seattle where he specialized in civil engineering.

In 1877, on the death of his brother, he was made Captain of the *Zepher*, a sternwheeler that plied between Olympia and Seattle.

In 1887, he joined forces with Captain J. A. Hatfield and opened a feed store on Salmon Bay. One day a logger, who had run up a large bill for hay and feed for his horses used in logging the Salmon Bay claim, came into the store and announced that he did not have enough cash to pay his bill. However, he would pay his bill with 160 acres of the Salmon Bay claim land that he had. Captains Ballard and Hatfield agreed to the deal.

Later, the sea captains dissolved their partnership and divided their assets. Neither man wanted the 160 acres of "worthless" land in Salmon Bay. So they decided to flip a coin, the loser getting the land. Captain Ballard lost!

In 1887, he joined forces with John Leary, B.J. Tallman, and Thomas Burke to form a corporation, the West Coast Improvement Company. It was a land development venture and is noted in regional history as the single most important successful real estate development in any community on Puget Sound in the nineteenth century.

In 1889, Burlington Northern tracks made their way to Salmon Bay. At the end of the line, the conductor would call out, "Ballard Junction! All out for Ballard Junction!" aware of Ballard's leadership in the area.

The *Polk Directory* for 1890-1892 lists only one school, the Ballard Union School #50 at Tallman Avenue. According to this source, the school was renamed Ballard Public School in 1893 and it appears this was another name for the famous old Central School. In 1901, the Ballard School District started a four year high school department at Central School.

In 1907, Ballard, Washington was annexed to Seattle, but the name Ballard continues to honor its namesake, Captain William R. Ballard.

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