**June 2023 Historical Moment- the Staysail Schooner “Fantome”**

This month’s historical moment concerns a former denizen of Portage Bay, the staysail schooner “Fantome”. The 282-foot Fantome, a magnificent four-masted sailing ship that once was a Seattle landmark to the ferryboat Kalakala. The magnificent ship spent 14 years' residence in Portage Bay from the years 1939 to 1955.

The Fantome's checkered history began in Italy at the end of World War I. Built as a warship, only the hull had been completed when the war ended, leaving the unfinished hulk to sit for years. In 1927, the rusting skeleton was bought by the English Duke of Westminster, who converted it to a sailing yacht - the Flying Cloud.

During the Depression, the ship was sold to Arthur Guinness, the Irish brewery tycoon who renamed it Fantome. In 1939, Guinness was sailing up the Pacific Coast, bound for Alaska, when Hitler invaded Poland, triggering World War II. Fearing that the ship would be commandeered by the British Navy, the captain tucked into Puget Sound and eventually anchored off the Seattle Yacht Club in Portage Bay.

There it stayed for 14 years, through the war and beyond.

Meanwhile, Guinness died and the ship became embroiled in legal disputes, including a city claim for back taxes. Some 80 cases of booze, including fine wines, 40-year-old brandies and bottles of Guinness Stout were still stowed in the bilges and sealed by U.S. Customs.

In 1950, the Fantome was bought for $50,000 by William and Joseph Jones, Seattle fish-cannery operators. They talked about opening a maritime museum, but ultimately settled for guided tours to benefit local charities.

The ship finally left Seattle in 1953, and was sold to Aristotle Onassis, the Greek shipping magnate. He planned to make it a wedding gift to Princess Grace of Monaco. But the present was never delivered because Onassis was not invited to the wedding.

Instead, the Fantome was towed to Germany and then to Spain, where she deteriorated for 17 more years.

In 1969, Windjammer, the Miami cruise company bought the ship and refitted her for cruising the Caribbean.

In late October, 1998 Hurricane Mitch converged on Central America and Fantome’s captain tried desperately to outmaneuver the storm. The ship dropped off its passengers in Belize, then headed north. The storm seemed to shift northward, so the captain turned back to the southeast. And so did Mitch.

When the Fantome's last message was transmitted, the ship was hiding behind the island of Roatan, north of Honduras - and directly in the path of the storm.

In combing an estimated 120,000 square miles, searchers pulled one woman from the water who initially indicated she was a survivor from the ship. But officials said she was delirious. On 2 November, a helicopter dispatched by the British destroyer HMS Sheffield discovered life rafts and vests labeled "S/V Fantome" off the eastern coast of Guanaja. It was all that was found*.* All 31 crew members aboard perished and a memorial service was held for them on December 12, 1998.

This is your station historian reminding you that it’s easy to get buried in the past…..