



Discoveries

News and Views from Discovery Southeast

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No Name Bay and other misnomers

Richard Carstensen

"A naturalist is somebody that knows a lot of names." Kayaker from California, met on Halibut Island, mouth of Port Frederick, 1994.

I became a naturalist at Juneau's Eagle Beach in the 1980s. Although I didn't think to wonder about it at the time, Eagle Beach and Eagle River derive their names not from any surfeit of eagles but from the Eagle Glacier up valley. The glacier itself was named by naval commander Richard Meade in 1869 "because of this feature's resemblance to an eagle with outstretched wings."¹

Meade's view of Eagle Glacier was almost certainly from saltwater. Today there are few places in Favorite Channel from which its corrugated icefalls can be seen, and what we do see looks nothing like an eagle. Over the last 130 years, the glacier surface has downwasted hundreds of feet. Staring at my photos of the glacier from *M/V Columbia*, trying to restore the 1869 ice levels in my imagination, I catch teasing glimpses of Meade's eagle. Such is the lure (and triviality?) of prospecting Euro-American place names.

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To understand Eagle Beach I had to map it, and to situate the thousands of notes I took there, I needed place names. On my 1983 map of the scout camp area there are 25 or so names, only one of which pre-dated my 12-year residence there. Others I had to invent. Shunning IWGNs (Important White Guy Names), I tried to apply names that actually carried information about places. "Dowitcher Slough," clogged with river mud, drew flocks of the little syringe-billed probers. The ancient hemlocks on "Porcupine Ridge" bore serial



View northwest over Eagle Beach. Eagle River belonged to the L'eeneidi people. In 1946, William Kunz stated: "I am a native of Juneau, born at Eagle River – Asx'ée – on May 7, 1875. My grandfather was born there. . . At the time of my birth at Eagle River, I estimate the number of my people to have been in excess of 50. . . My forebearers . . . have continuously used the Eagle River area for their summer and winter camps."²

wounds inflicted by generations of patient cambium chewers. “Shifty Spit” quickly validated its name by vanishing.

Unfortunately, meaningful place names are exceptions rather than the rule throughout the Alexander Archipelago. Tsar Alexander still reigns, along with a couple thousand other Important White Guys. Although few of us have any clue who they were, we pronounce their names daily. IWGNs actually serve to *disconnect* us from places. Names that could as well have been chosen by the roll of dice do not invite us deeper into a place’s secrets. Some of my own favorite places I call by names that cover their stories like tasteless paint on fine hardwood: Prince of Wales Island, Seymour Canal, Saginaw Bay (named for Richard Meade’s warship which destroyed two Kake villages!).

The most successful namer of Southeast Alaskan places was Captain George Vancouver. Sickly, tyrannical, and prone to tantrums, he nevertheless was a master at getting things done:

“Vancouver named his land- and sea-marks after high-ups at the Admiralty, whose goodwill might lead to his promotion; after old friends and mentors, . . . after incidents of the voyage; and after his own bipolar mental states. Most of his names stuck. Two hundred years later one could read the charts of the Northwest coast as a candid diary of Vancouver’s expedition; a map of his mind, in all its changing moods and preoccupations.”³

Several years ago I purchased – for 10 times its government-listed value of \$8.50 – a 1967 edition of Donald Orth’s *Dictionary of Alaska Place Names*. The problem with this tome is that it’s too ponderous to take kayaking. When you’re out there scratching your head over the origins of “Butterball Lake” or “Obsechi Island” the book is back home on the shelf. I’ve long wanted to recoup my investment by spending a couple of rainy weeks mining Orth for its wisdom and frivolity. This fall’s foul weather proved conducive.

I discovered that Orth contains 5107 place names for Southeast Alaska.



Spruces colonizing old cedar house beams at the abandoned Haida village of Klinkwan, southern Prince of Wales Island. This country was Kaigani Haida territory even before Bering’s 1741 voyage. The name “Klinkwan,” however, is Tlingit. It tells of a time before the Haida immigration, and testifies to the “hoary antiquity”⁴ of certain names.

Of these, 85% are English; 3% are Spanish; 4% are Russian; and 9% are Tlingit (with a scattering of Haida and Tsimshian). The attempts at Tlingit spelling are rarely very faithful to their original pronunciation, and few translations are offered. Orth seems to do better with Eskimo and Koyukon word meanings than with Tlingit.

Of the 4326 English place names, 2509 (58%) honor people, ships, and non-Alaskan places, and could be termed “biographical.” The remaining 1817 names are “descriptive.” I sorted the latter into physical, biological, and human-centered categories. Comparing percentages of names in these descriptive categories to those of the Spanish explorers, I found that the Spanish were twice as likely as the English and Americans to use human-centered categories. They were less likely to name places for physical features.

As I digested Euro-American place names, my taste grew for the Spanish ones, especially those given between 1774 and 1779 by Don Juan de la Bodega y Quadra, and his pilot Francisco Antonio Maurelle. Their names, mostly for places near western Prince of Wales Island, are quite frequently descriptive and often more imaginative than the English or Russian names: *Punta del Blanquizal* (point of pipe clay); *Isla Quitasueño* (keep-awake island).

But the Spaniards’ knowledge of place, as reflected in these names, was no richer than that of their Euro-American rivals. Half of their descriptive names are human-centered, involving action (eg. fishing, punishment) and made object (sword, cauldron). And they rarely reached beyond the common European experience for natural features after which to name a place. Some names are even “imports”: *Punta de Cocos* (point of palms); *Isla Culebra* (snake island).

Most early explorers of the Pacific coast – from Mexico to Alaska – brought a burden of antagonism towards the untamed:

“The Spanish have the same word for desert and wilderness, *desierto*, which is derived from the Latin *desertus* meaning to abandon. In contrast, ‘wilderness’ comes from the Old English words *wild deor*, meaning place of the wild beasts, and is related to the Old English word for forests. Both Spanish and English associated wilderness with a place they considered to be hostile, lonely and fearful, a place that had to be conquered.”⁵

Some would say we haven’t changed. As for

Stereogram, July 1999.

Junction of the Lace and Antler Rivers in Berners Bay. Captain Vancouver's mother, Bridget Berners, scored big here. Her given and surnames survive on point, cove, park, river and bay. Vancouver, who habitually "developed" the raw wilderness into scenes of pastoral British bliss in his mind's eye, would no doubt approve of the proposed road to Skagway which transects these flats.

The Berners, Lace, Antler and Gilkey Rivers were home to two Wooshkeetaan villages. The upper one, Kutak.áan, lay just to the left of this scene at the Berners/Lace confluence. The other was on the glacially rebounding floodplain in the lower right.² Slate Lakes are in the left foreground.



Tlingit, there appears to be no direct translation for "wilderness."

What do descriptive place names tell us about the relationship of people to place? And did that relationship mature between 1741 and the mid-1900s, when the frenzy of naming abated? Orth usually gives the date when a name was first

recorded. This permits a study of "place name succession." From thousands of Southeast names I distilled a short list of attention-grabbers, which marry poetry, humor, information and intrigue. Most were given in this century, and none date to the early period of exploration. By my tastes at least, we've gotten a little better at naming since the days of Vancouver and Meade:

Botany Pk (1925 - by Allen Hassleborg for anomalous alpine flora); **The Breadline** (1962 - one of Juneau's favorite trolling areas); **Chicken Ridge** (late 1800s? center of Juneau, which once had hooters); **Driest Point** (1883 - where all Southeasterners want to be); **Maybeso Creek** (1908 - logged for science in 1954); **Sigh Islands** (1964 - no info given); **South Trick Lake** (1962 - margin of Brady Glacier, periodically empties); **Sudden Stream** (1951 - heads in terminus lake of Malaspina Glacier); **White Thunder Ridge** (1946 - for noise echoing from calving glaciers in Muir Inlet).

Many non-Native Alaskan residents have deeper connections to this place than did their expeditionary predecessors. But the rootedness of Tlingit elders is of yet another order. Tlingit place names are stars in constellations of stories binding people to sheltering coves, clam flats, sockeye lakes, observation points, nagoonberry meadows, halibut holes, and abandoned but dearly remembered villages. Tlingit is a verb-rich language. More gracefully than English it conveys process. Complex transformations can be packed into names; *Sít'eei Geeyí* means "bay taking the place of the glacier,"⁶ much stronger than the English "Glacier Bay."

Biographical place naming is almost non-existent in Tlingit. Ironically, some of the Tlingit place names in Orth were given by whites to honor Native individuals: Ankau Saltchucks, Annahootz Mountain. This practise would have been considered inappropriate in a culture where, in contrast, people and clans take their names from places.

Tom Thornton, Associate Professor of Anthropology at UAS, has been working with Tlingit elders throughout Southeast Alaska to document Native place names. Although Orth lists only 460 Native place names on the Tongass, thousands are still known by Tlingit speakers. Tom and his collaborators transcribe, translate, and map these names, recording associated cultural and subsistence information. The resulting maps and database are held by each community.

To illustrate, Tom showed me a CD that's being used in the Angoon schools. Beginning with an aerial photo of the Killisnoo Peninsula, he layered it with a sprinkling of Tlingit names too dense to be accommodated on an inch-to-the-mile USGS map. As Tom clicked on several place

SEMANTIC CATEGORIES – S.E. AK PLACE NAMES

		% English n=4326	% Spanish n=153	% Tlingit* n=2186
CATEGORY	EXAMPLE			
physical				
geomorphic	Crater Ridge	9	10	41
color	Silver Bay	2	1	NA
weather/sea	Ripple Cove	1	1	NA
relational	Upper Lake	8	1	13
total		21	14	NA
biological				
plant	Strawberry Is	3	7	8
animal	Beaver Creek	7	3	23
total		10	14	30
human-centered				
anatomical	Elbow Bay	1	1	4
action	Passage Island	3	8	NA
made object	Biscuit Knob	3	7	NA
historical	Justice Creek	2	3	7
mood	Eerie Point	1	3	NA
other	Nun Mountain	2	5	NA
total		11	26	22
biographical	Douglas Island	58	47	1

* English & Spanish names are those listed in Orth 1967
Tlingit name %'s are from Thornton (unpublished)

On the southern Tongass glacial rebound has been nil for millennia. Beach rocks are at the same tidal elevation where the Heenya people left them. Kayakers naturally gravitate to these venerable pathways. In the morning, when I broke my camp above this canoe drag (a strip cleared of rocks to protect wooden-hulled craft), I launched into the rising tide wearing sandals and never wet my feet. Back in the cedar forest is a



names, Angoon elder Lydia George pronounced them. The program can zoom in on any selected location, to photos of the clan houses, for example. From Angoon we jumped over to Sitkoh Bay on Chichagof Island, one of a dozen key subsistence places lining both sides of Chatham Strait.

What an extraordinary blend of traditional wisdom and information-age flash! Angoon kids are listening to Lydia George's voice as they explore their future with a mouse. Somehow, we *have* to make this work.

In *Wisdom sits in Places*, Keith Basso quotes White Mountain Apache Ronnie Lupe:

"Our children are losing the land. It doesn't go to work on them anymore. They don't know the stories about what happened in those places. That's why some get into trouble."

So much has been lost, culturally and ecologically, that at times the land itself seems to weep. In late June, 1994, I joined 40 artists at a gathering in Seclusion Harbor, on eastern Kuiu Island. For me it was the beginning of a 3-week paddle clockwise around the island. The Kuiu Artists' Retreat was held in a proposed timber sale unit to honor the ancient forest. Camping with 40 friends was probably as close as any of us will come to the "tribal experience." When the last boat departed, and I was left alone with my kayak, the sorrows of Kuiu settled hard on me for 3 days.

Kuiu Island was named for the *Kuyu Kwáan*, who lived in the village of *Kalhéen Aan* in the paradise now known as Tebenkof Bay. Most were annihilated by smallpox. A few survivors crossed the island to No Name Bay, from which they dispersed to Klawock and Kake. Each kayaker strokes in the wake of these people. We hear them in the camps and garden sites, most clearly when we're alone.

It was deer that brought me peace on the third day. Three gorgeous bucks in summer red-orange. I was gliding toward a creek mouth to gather water when I saw them. The largest approached cautiously to 10 yards in

the new sun, head low, nostrils working, shivering when my hull touched gravel. Glistening in health. Hair-triggered. Hot, bulbous-tipped velvety antlers, swinging in starts, holding something out to me.

Thank you Island.

The name of No Name Bay is *K'adsa*.



NOTES

¹ Orth, D. 1967 *Dictionary of Alaska Place Names*. US Gov. Printing Office. Washington DC.

² Goldschmidt, W. and T. Haas, 1998 *Haa Aaní, Our Land; Tlingit and Haida Land Rights and Use*. (New edition with introduction by Thomas Thornton) U of Washington Press, Seattle.

³ Raban, J. 1999 *Passage to Juneau – A Sea and its Meanings*. Pantheon Books, New York.

⁴ "Place names often come down from a hoary antiquity, and the original meaning is often not known to the latter-day people who live in the region." Waterman, 1922, in Thornton, T. *Anthropological Studies of Native American Place Naming* American Indian Quarterly, Spring, 1997, Vol. 21(2). Haida people apparently continued to use some Tlingit village names.

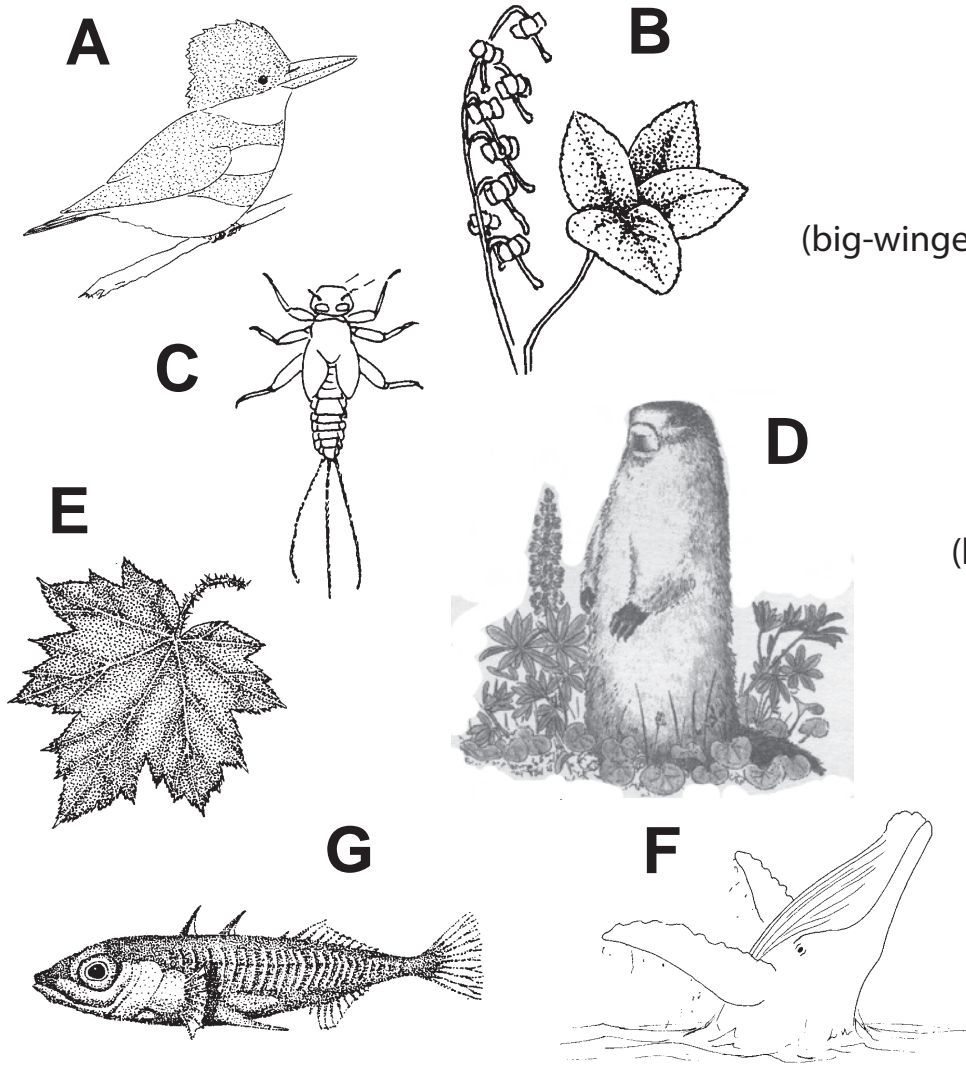
⁵ Simonian, L. 1995, *Defending the Land of the Jaguar – A History of Conservation in Mexico*. U of Texas Press. Austin.

⁶ Thornton, T. 1995 *Tlingit and Euro-American Toponymies in Glacier Bay* Proceedings of the 3rd Glacier Bay Science Symposium, NPS, Anchorage.

What's in a name?

Kathy Hocker

The English and scientific names of plants and animals sometimes come from people's names - for example, the Steller's Jay (*Cyanocitta stelleri*), is named for traveler George Steller, who described this bold indigo bird to other Europeans. But sometimes their names describe the plants and animals *themselves* - in very clever ways. Try to match the Southeast Alaskan plants and animals below with their English or Latin (scientific) names:



1. Megaptera novaengiae
(big-winged one from New England)

2. Flat-headed mayfly

3. One-sided wintergreen

4. Oplopanax horridum
(horrible weapon-ginseng)

5. Belted Kingfisher

6. Threespine stickleback

7. Marmota calligata
(marmot wearing boots)

If you could name your favorite plant or animal in a way that describes it best, what would you choose?

answer to puzzle: 1F, 2C, 3B, 4E, 5A, 6B, 7D

Naturalist profile – Diane Antaya

Sue Baxter *DS board member*

Diane, or as my class called her, “Ms. Antaya the Science Gal,” is a special gift to Discovery Southeast’s naturalist staff.

During elementary school in Visalia, CA, Diane attended a week-long science camp. She clearly remembers hiking unfamiliar trails and being encouraged to appreciate the silence and the sound, to discover all there was to see. She loved it! “I thought the people who worked there were so lucky to be able to live and work there!” She returned in high school as a camp counselor.

At the University of California, San Luis Obispo, Diane majored in natural resource management, taking additional courses in biology, zoology, botany, and geology. While working at a camp like her elementary experience, she decided her future employment must include “children, natural history, and working outdoors.”

Out she went, first as a seasonal employee for the National Park Service at Sequoia, Redwood, and Glacier Bay (where she boarded cruise ships on a swinging ladder at running speed from a skiff -- her “Jane Bond” days,) then as the permanent Education Specialist at Dinosaur National Monument and Capital Reef National Park in Utah.

But her early experiences at Glacier Bay had sunk a hook. Returning to Southeast in 1995 with her husband Ron, she turned her attention to creating a home and life in Alaska. After a summer of “naturalizing” for Allen Marine and Canadian River Expeditions on the Alsek, she thrilled students at Harborview with an excellent student-teaching experience. On December 23, 1997, Santa conspired with the great stork to deliver her son, Elias.



Now she has re-entered the workplace as a naturalist for Discovery Southeast. Diane brings a depth of experience, education, and training to each class. We are lucky to have “Diane Antaya, the Science Gal.”

Naturalist profile – Walt Chapman

Jane Roodenburg

Walt Chapman, one of Discovery Southeast’s new naturalists, was inspired in his love of nature at an early age. As a kid in Vermont and Connecticut, he loved tidepooling, exploring secret and wondrous sites on his bike, and trout fishing; which not only gave him an understanding of fish, but also a passion for aquatic insects that he brings with him to the classroom. In a recent small group lesson, he brought each child a jar with a live caddisfly larva in it. Inspecting strange yet close neighbors such as insect larvae is a great way to get kids excited about a subject. “Sharing that with kids is fun,” says Chapman. “The ‘hook’ is already there; you don’t have to do a song and dance to make that interesting!” Speaking of hooks, Chapman often includes fly-tying in his lessons. It’s a great way to get kids to really understand why insects look and behave the way they do, and the same for fish. A good fly-fisherman has to understand bugs if he wants to get a bite.

Chapman credits his parents for guiding him in his early love of nature. They encouraged exploration, understanding and respect for the environment, which in turn gave him a greater sense of self, plus a lot of good times! “I wasn’t a very academic kid” he says, “but I was a strong naturalist at an early age. I knew secret spots, and interesting things that other kids

didn’t know. This gave me a lot of self-esteem at a time when school work was hard, and hard on my self worth.”

Chapman is enjoying his position as naturalist at Gastineau School. He is a certified teacher with a background in a variety of education settings, often focused on special populations, with teaching experience in Oregon, Vermont, and Connecticut. In Juneau, he taught at the Peregrine School, and was director of the Children’s Community Center. Of course, he’s always tried to connect his love of the outdoors with his students but now he says that “it’s neat to tie my vocation and avocation together.”

“We’re lucky, here in Southeast, to have such a wide variety of natural systems so close together,” says Chapman. “Within an afternoon’s walk you can go from intertidal to

alpine tundra and everything in between. It's an easy place to be a naturalist. It gives kids lots of experience with different parts of their world."

Chapman is married and has two children, four and eight years old, who continue training him as a teacher, naturalist, and human being.

We are happy to welcome Walt to our staff of naturalists. He brings with him a solid and varied teaching background and a lifetime of naturalist explorations.



Thoughts on the vision of Nature Studies

Kathy Hocker *DS Naturalist at Juneau Community Charter School*

I grew up in Pre-Discovery Foundation Juneau. For students my age at Auke Bay, Floyd Dryden, and JDHS, there was minimal contact with what was outside of the school grounds -- in most of my classes, science was primarily an indoor pursuit.

Fortunately for me, I had parents, teachers, and other adult friends for whom outdoor exploration and discovery were essential. I flew hundreds of hours with my dad in his Cessna 180, landing in remote sites, walking the beaches in search of bear tracks, fishing for steelhead, learning to spot mountain goats. I crawled through the bushes with my mother in our secret berry-picking places, laughing at the leaves in our hair when we emerged. Adventures outdoors with adult friends taught me that it was more than OK to get your hands dirty in pursuit of an answer or a discovery. By their actions they showed me that this land is worth knowing and loving.

I think it's their fault that I keep moving back here. From the crumbling cliffs of Big Sur to the smoldering colors of New England autumn, the landscapes of my non-Alaskan life have never been able to compare to spruce and salt and raven sounds. There are roots - emotional, physical, and mental - that I can feel, always pulling me home, and I have the folks who took me exploring, and taught me to think and to ask questions, to thank for that. They didn't make the tie, but they brought me to the place where it tied itself.

I was very lucky in this. For a lot of the kids I grew up with, nature was very much an "other." Despite the number of folks in Juneau who fish, hunt, and boat, there are still so many here for whom the woods, bogs, meadows, and mountains are inconveniences, threats or just backdrops.

Kids hear a lot these days - in school, on TV, in the movies - about "environmental problems." What they may not get so much of is encouragement of physical, emotional, and mental ties with the land, and the cognitive tools that

will help them learn and make informed decisions about the environment. To me, it seems that our job at Discovery is two-part: to help students grow the ties and to help them develop observation and thinking skills. I think our greatest purpose as Discovery naturalists is to be the woods-walkers, the mud-scoopers and bug-catchers and bone-finders, the question-encouragers, the storytellers and guides and friends who share the way our own roots curl through this land and model the way we keep our own connections.

I've heard the argument that we don't have time to trust that this "subversive" environmental-education style will work - we need to, in effect, graft the environmental action into kids at an early age. There's merit in that. But without the tie, it seems a rather hollow environmentalism. How will students justify their actions - to themselves as well as others - without a deeper understanding of the consequences?

Our time with kids is so limited, and there are so many other tugs on their minds and hearts. We can't know if the kids we connect with will turn out to be future Rachel Carsons or Aldo Leopolds, or even just adults who think twice when they vote. But we try to make the most of our time with them by providing opportunity and guidance in learning about the world outside the schools and streets. We strive to encourage their roots in the land, and trust that their lives will grow nourished by these roots, and they will become adults who make informed, caring, and conscientious choices about their natural home.





STEREOGRAM USFS, 1984 DOWN-TOWN JUNEAU *(For use with 3D viewer)*

Gold Creek descends from the valley in upper left and shoots past the Federal Building in a concrete bed where dippers still find mayflies in winter. The Tlingit name for Gold Creek is *Dzantik'i Heeni*, or “creek of the little flounders,” for the juvenile starry flounders that once reared in its estuary.

The State Office Building, second tallest in this 3D view, dominates Chicken Ridge, a NW-

trending greenschist outcrop in the heart of town. This ridge bears “the oldest local name in the city of Juneau” (Orth, 1967), probably referring to blue grouse, which have long since been replaced by musicians & state employees.

Juneau is built on Gold Creek’s ancient delta, formed when sea levels were much higher. When you drop from 7th Street down to Merchants Wharf, you follow the surface of this delta. The Governor’s Mansion sits on a lower deltaic terrace, formed later as sea levels declined.