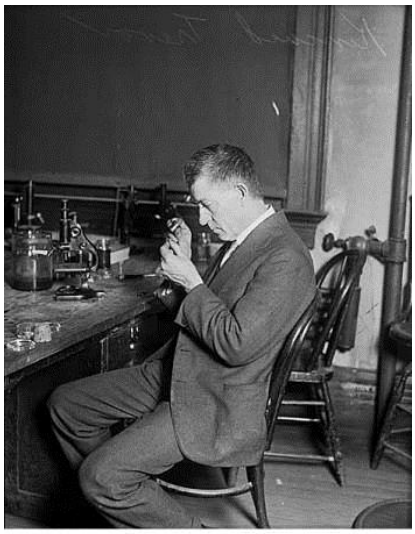
Trevor Kincaid: Second President of the Stillaguamish Country Club

When Trevor Kincaid purchased a lot in the Stillaguamish Fishing and Country Club in 1925, the organizers must have been overjoyed. He was a well-known scientist and faculty member of the University of Washington and in high demand as a public speaker. In 1925, he was 47, chair of the University of Washington's Zoology Department, was experimenting with the Japanese oyster and was about to play a significant role in establishing the state's oyster industry.



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Trevor Kincaid, 1927

He had already founded what was to become the UW's Friday Harbor Laboratories and introduced a parasite wasp to stem the spread of the Gypsy moth. He left a large footprint in the state but nearly no trace at the Stillaguamish Country Club. He served on the Board of Directors in 1927 and 1928 and in 1928 became the club's second president. The club's 50th Anniversary Book notes that Kincaid joined in 1925 and sold in 1942. He had lot 16 but never built a cabin. In 1936, the club's secretary-treasurer notified him he was delinquent in his dues.

Kincaid was born in Ontario, where he had shown his interest in the natural world and in collecting insect specimens. At the end of seventh grade, he took a province-wide written examination and received the highest mark of any test taker. His father, a physician, had financial problems and went west to start a new practice. Trevor followed him to Olympia, arriving in 1889, the year Washington became a state, to a small town filled with stumps and mud roads. Only one of four school districts in the state offered education beyond the eighth grade and Dr. Kincaid thought his son would waste his time attending Olympia's high school. Instead, Trevor helped his father, wandered the woods, and rummaged for books in the Capitol Building and elsewhere. Finally, in 1894, when he was 22 he made it to Seattle where he enrolled in the territorial university, which was housed in a single building in downtown Seattle (Guberlet, 1975). The next year the campus moved to its current location north of the ship canal. Trevor was destitute but got by as a teaching assistant and gifts from his academic mentor who recognized his brilliance. Before entering the university, he had a reputation as an insect collector—having sent more than 100,000 specimens to entomologists in the eastern United States. As an undergraduate he continued collecting and expanded his interests to marine organisms. He and a friend regularly dredged areas of Puget Sound.

In 1897, Kincaid was invited to join a scientific expedition to Alaska's Pribiloff Islands. His work on that trip resulted in an invitation to join the Harriman Expedition in 1899, which had 15 scientists including John Muir. During the Harriman Expedition, he collected 8000 specimens including 1000 insect species; 300 were new to science and 11 were subsequently named after Kincaid. The expedition's report filled 17 volumes, two devoted exclusively to Kincaid's insect research. On his return to Seattle, he was invited to teach zoology at the University of Washington. He was 26.

Muriel Guberlet's biography of Kincaid offers a wonderful glimpse of the travails of academics at the fledgling University of Washington. During its early years the campus was frequented by wandering

cows. Initially all classes were in Denny Hall (the sciences had one floor). In 1902, the sciences moved to Science Hall (now Parrington). The university was underfunded, under the thumb of the governor, and university presidents had short tenures. Zoology was part of the Biology Department until 1903, when it was divided and Kincaid was named chairman of the fledgling department. He took a leave of absence in 1906 and studied at Harvard for a year. Also in 1906, Kincaid was asked by the US Government to visit Japan to investigate the life of the gypsy moth, an insect that was damaging trees in New England.

Kincaid and the UW's Friday Harbor Laboratory

The University of Washington's Friday Harbor Laboratories date to 1903 when Kincaid chose Friday Harbor after looking at several sites around Puget Sound. In June 1904, he and Botany Professor T. C. Frye set up a camp in Friday Harbor for 6 weeks of field studies with about a dozen students. Summer sessions continued for a number of years at various sites in leased or borrowed space.

In 1909 the laboratories found a permanent home on 4 acres donated by a local landowner. The site had access to deep water, a good fresh water supply, and a view of Mount Baker. The State Legislature appropriated $6000 for buildings and $500 for equipment. Construction of the Puget Sound Marine Station began in 1912, the same year Kincaid was named the station's director, a position he held until 1916.

Kincaid and Oysters

One of Kincaid's first meals when he arrived in Olympia to join his father in 1889 was oysters. He loved the shellfish but they were about to largely disappear from Washington waters. In 1911 and 1916 Kincaid was asked by the US Bureau of Fisheries to consider what could be done to save the oyster. He concluded (Guberlet) "that the chances of preserving the local oyster beds were very slight." Native oysters were small—2000 to 2500 were required for a gallon of meat. They were difficult to raise because they needed to be protected from heat in summer and cold in winter. However, Kincaid had found oysters in cultivation Japan that he thought might be transplanted. Eventually, two brothers from Olympia with eight partners bought 600 acres of tidelands in Samish Bay 10 miles south of Bellingham and founded the Pearl Oyster Company. Transplanting oysters turned out to be complicated; however, Kincaid worked on the concept and eventually by the use of "spat" rather than mature oysters, the industry took off. This was about 1923, several years before Kincaid became a member of the Stillaguamish Country Club. When asked about areas where the oyster might flourish, Kincaid recommended Willapa Bay (Grays Harbor County) and Kincaid became the biological advisor of the Willapoint Oyster Company. As an incentive, grower Gerald Mogan, who had purchased 7000 acres of tideland for taxes, gave Kincaid 43 acres of oyster land and he purchased an additional 10 acres (likely in the late 1920s.)

In 1917, during his early oyster research, Kincaid married one of his students, Louise Pennell, who was about 20 years younger than he. Their honeymoon included a trip to the Biological Station at Friday Harbor. She moved into Trevor's home on Brooklyn Avenue in Seattle's University District, which was also occupied by her nearly blind mother-in-law and Kincaid's sister. Their first child, a daughter, arrived several years later and eventually they had four more children (four girls and one boy). Kincaid's mother and father both died in 1923. According to Guberlet, the University District was growing rapidly; the house was too small for the growing family and frequent guests, so Kincaid sold the house for "an

apartment house site" and built a large home on the corner of Northeast 52nd Street and 19th Avenue Northeast.

This must have been about the time he joined the Stillaguamish Country Club. Might he have been acquainted with the club and its concept by Angus Malloy, a founding member and a developer who built several apartments in the University District? Or was he contacted by a door-to-door solicitor hawking the club? A third possibility is that he knew the forester and club founder, Burt Kirkland, a colleague at the university.

According to Guberlet, in 1929, Kincaid was asked to resolve another problem. Seattle had been invaded by earwigs. He had observed earwigs in the area in 1907 but at the time they were only considered a nuisance. In 1929, the population was worried they would destroy gardens and shrubs. The city spent thousands on poison bait to be spread by professional "baiters," mainly students who trampled gardens as they worked. The program cost was $125,000, paid for by homeowner taxes. When asked about the efficacy of the program, Kincaid said a predator beetle was already killing earwigs and that the baiting program wasn't needed. As the controversy dragged on, Kincaid and his family spent the summer at their cabin in Nahcotta on Willapa Bay.

In 1934, when the university had yet another president, the new president suggested to the alumni association that the university could help the institution gain respect and loyalty by honoring a distinguished graduate. The association selected Kincaid as the first recipient of *Alumnus Summa Laude Dignatatus.* He had started at the university in 1894 as a bottle washer paid $25 a month. This was just one of a series of honors; in 1938 the University of Puget Sound named him an honorary Doctor of Science.

Kincaid turned 70 in 1942 and by university regulations had to retire. (His salary at retirement was $6000 a year.) In honor of his career, Dr. Melville Hatch wrote a history of the Zoology Department and a series of three papers: *Studies Honoring Trevor Kincaid* that were published by the University of Washington Press. Shortly after he retired, Kincaid was asked if he would teach part time because so many competent teachers were in the military. So he taught for another 4 years. He also began 11 years of service as advisor to the Shell Fish Laboratory of the State Fisheries Service. About the time he left that lab in 1952, he said in a speech to shellfish growers that the industry had grown from 400 cases of oysters in 1922 to a million-dollar-a year market in 1936 to $6 million a year in 1951.

Louise Kincaid died of cancer in 1964. In 1967, the year he turned 95, he began an ecological survey of Willapa Bay using data he had others collect. And on the eve of his 97th birthday, University President Charles Odegaard called on him at home to tell him that the Board of Regents had voted to name a new campus building Trevor Kincaid Hall. This was a tribute to his 75 years of service to the university and state of Washington. With the naming of Kincaid Hall, he became the second club member to be so honored. Raitt Hall in the university's "quad" was named for Effie Raitt, member from 1932–1945.

As of 1975 when Muriel Guberlet wrote her excellent biography of Kincaid, he had published more than 30 scientific papers and 77 plants and animals had been named for him. He died July 1, 1970.

Kathy Murray, club historian

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Sources

Guberlet, M.L. The Windows to his World. The Story of Trevor Kincaid. Palo Alto, CA: Pacific Press, 1975.

http://faculty.washington.edu/cemills/FHLTimeline.html