



THE EDGE OF FORGOTTEN -

PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE HASTINGS BUILDING

BY JOE LIPKA

THE EDGE OF FORGOTTEN

She was a beauty. She was the belle of the ball. She was the prettiest in town. Now, one hundred and twenty years later she stands proudly as a dowager holding court on Water Street as she continues to overlook the Puget Sound. Still cloaked in her Victorian finery, she is a reminder of the elegance we once prized. She maintains her worthy vigil between the land and the sea though now only as a fixture from an era long past.

Now she balances precariously on the precipice between reality and memory where the hand hold is tenuous and the footing treacherous. And yet, she endures. She is buffeted by many forces as she is neither completely abandoned nor fully utilized. She is an unseen landmark simply because her beauty is currently unfashionable and out of style. Many factors push and pull competing for her future.

She is in a struggle for survival. Her opponents are many: gravity, neglect, dust and cold. Her most relentless foe is time. Must time always win this conflict? The components of her character - her design, the materials which compose her structure, the craftsmanship of her construction - are her strengths and all are aiding her in her battle. And yet the question remains: how long can this grand dame survive her opponents balancing as she is on the edge of forgotten?





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CHICAGO

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I am an engineer by education and sentiment. As you might expect, I select my photographic projects after much thought and planning. I work diligently on those projects after much preparation. I enjoy thoroughly planning every aspect as doing so enables me to execute most of my projects with ease and joy. However, I am aware that sometimes life throws me a curve. This experience is known by many names. You may call it serendipity, divine providence, predestination, or just plain good fortune. We all know it when we experience it and when this happens to me in terms of my photographic projects, I've learned to dive in with as much enthusiasm and focus as I do when I have every detail under my control. By way of example of this anomaly, I offer you the following background to this folio.

Brooks Jensen and I were photographing in Port Townsend, Washington in 2007. After a day and a half of photography, we decided that we were finished with our respective projects and decided to leave that lovely town and head for the Hoh Rain Forest on the opposite side of the Olympic Peninsula. On the way back to the motel, I asked Brooks to stop by a bookstore on Water Street so I could pick up an Edward Weston exhibition catalog. Brooks parked the truck on the street and waited while I made my purchase.

When I returned from the bookstore, Brooks told me he was impressed with a huge Victorian building across the street. The apparently abandoned upper stories of the building piqued his curiosity. I am enamored with Victorian architecture and instantly recognized an opportunity. I suggested we inquire about photographing the building. We went into the ground floor shop seeking information. When we left the shop we had the landlord's phone number. While we relaxed on a bench across the street from the building, Brooks made a call to the landlord. He was unable to talk to the landlord

directly, so he left an introductory message and a request to photograph the building. We did not receive a reply that afternoon.

The following morning we left Port Townsend as per our plan and began our drive to the other side of the Olympic Peninsula. We drove. We stopped. We photographed. We do this a lot on our trips. It was during one of those photographic stops in the middle of the afternoon that Brooks received a call on his cell phone. It was the landlord. She apologized for missing our call. She explained that after she received our message, she took some time to investigate our web sites and found us to be respectable photographers. She told us she could meet us the following day to show us the building. We turned the car around and started our drive back to Port Townsend wondering what we would find on the upper floors of that beautiful old building.

The following morning we were full of expectations when we met the landlord. As she led us on a tour of the Hastings Building we were stunned by what we saw because what she showed us was much more than we expected. The texture, materials, and craftsmanship were all exquisite. The design in terms of the proportion of the building was equally impressive. And the light, well the light was breathtaking. It was all so perfect. We were very happy photographers and we spent three days photographing this building.

The Hoh Rain Forest will have to wait for another trip. My carefully planned project was sidetracked by a big, old Victorian building. The results of this rearrangement to my schedule are included in part in this folio and it is my hope that as you look through these images you will experience as much pleasure as I did while I was making them.

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