

THE BELLINGHAM BAY CITIES.

BELLINGHAM bay indents the western shore of the most northwestern county of Washington. It is one of those basin-like harbors for which that remarkable body of water known by the general name of Puget sound is noted. It occupies an area of more than a township, and is separated from the Gulf of Georgia by Lummi point, which is really the huge delta, extending in a southerly direction, of the Nooksack river. The bay faces the south, and, being nearly opposite the Strait of Juan de Fuca, it is one of the most convenient to the ocean of the sound ports. It is easily accessible at all times for the largest marine craft, and it is one of the most promising places on the sound for the building up of large commercial interests.

On the northeastern corner of Bellingham bay are four towns in a row, touching each other and occupying together less than four miles of water front. These are Whatcom, Sehome, Bellingham and Fairhaven, named in their order from the north. The first two mentioned are incorporated cities. Whatcom is the largest and most important, having a population of about two thousand and being the county seat. Sehome follows with about a thousand inhabitants, and the other two have six or eight hundred people. They are all bustling, active, busy towns, and are free from those local jealousies that so often mar the prospects of cities having really advantageous situations. They are making rapid advancement, and their consolidation into one corporation is one of the things their citizens have in view for the not distant future.

Whatcom sprang into existence at the time of the gold excitement on Fraser river, just over the Canadian boundary, in 1858. It was then on one of the most popular routes to that northern El Dorado, and at one time there were several thousand gold hunters camped on the present site of Whatcom. They spent the winter there, and in the spring the tented city disappeared, but enough remained to found the town that is now receiving considerable attention from the whole northwest. The county of Whatcom was organized, a brick court house built and an efficient local government successfully inaugurated and commercial interests started. Still, as the establishment of the town at so early a date in that then very remote region was somewhat forced, it did not attain a healthy growth for some years—not until the country became sufficiently developed to have local demands that attracted trade from outside, and products that outside markets wanted. The coal mining that was carried on for years on Bellingham bay brought the section more particularly into prominence, and then

began the modern growth that is now in progress and is increasing with greater rapidity than ever before.

Up to the present time the only communication with Whatcom has been by water or by stage. It has a fine harbor, though the safe water for large vessels is about three thousand feet from shore. Most of the shallow water area is occupied by piles, on which many buildings are erected, and the whole space is gradually being utilized as the city expands. All steamers can land at the large dock now maintained on deep water, and there are ample accommodations for handling freight conveniently. There are daily boat connections for Seattle, Tacoma, Olympia, Port Townsend and the cities of British Columbia, as well as to the smaller towns and points of interest in the region of Bellingham bay.

Whatcom has three saw mills, a planing mill, a sash door and blind factory and two brick kilns. A sash, door and blind factory of large capacity is soon to be constructed and new wharf buildings are under way. Much has been done in the way of street improvements, over \$25,000.00 having been expended for that purpose last year, and this year the work is being continued on a still larger scale, provisions having been made for the expenditure of over \$60,000.00. Private enterprise is doing a great deal to improve the town by clearing the outskirts of the site of timber and erecting many neat and comfortable cottages and a number of residences of imposing architectural designs. On the business streets a great deal of building is being done, and several blocks that would be creditable to a city of greater pretensions than Whatcom are already completed and occupied. A number of structures, two, three and four stories in height, are now in course of construction. The city has a public school, four churches, a brick court house, a bank, and a newspaper, the only one published in the county. The railroad connections being established will give the city greater impetus than it has yet experienced. The outlet of Whatcom lake empties into the bay at Whatcom, where a waterfall makes a magnificent water power.

Sehome adjoins Whatcom on the southeast, and occupies a site of similar character, rising back from the water, though it does not have any considerable stretch of shallow water on its front. The same kind of growth is in progress there that has brought Whatcom to the front. The two cities are working harmoniously in opening up streets that join at the boundary between the two corporations and in other public works. Sehome has the largest and finest hotel on the bay, a national bank and a large number of business establishments of all kinds. It has schools, churches and public halls. A saw mill, planing mill and shingle mill constitute the chief manufacturing