

MT. BAKER AN ACTIVE VOLCANO.

Capt. Eldor: I have been here since December, 1852. I was formerly captain of sailing craft on the sound and on the ocean, although my first business venture here was in building the saw mill at Whatcom, in 1852. I furnished the first lumber to Victoria that was sawed other than by a whip saw. The little mill at Whatcom did it. The battle in Russian America, now Alaska, called Peter Pelaski, during the Crimean war, sent its English wounded to Esquimalt, and Mr. Peabody and myself furnished the lumber for the hospital on the order of Gov. Douglas. (The battle referred to was that of Petropavlovsk, Kamchatka peninsula, Siberia—Ed.) About Mt. Baker: I have watched it for thirty-five years from sea and land. It appears as an extinct volcano at times and again it is in an eruptive state. Mr. Rinschart and other settlers of Ten Mile have seen the mountain in an active state of eruption—belching fire and smoke. Ten Mile affords a better view of the mountain. In 1861 I was repairing the bark *Glimper*, at Ludlow, and at that time Olympus was in a state of eruption. John Bennett, Capt. Stratton and Coleman, a Scotch mountaineer, ascended Mt. Baker fifteen years ago. They reported the smell of burning sulphur and lead. The boys planted the American flag at the crater. Mr. John Tennant did not reach the top of the mountain. The party reported the top of the mountain to contain twelve acres. I have at night, on the water, several times seen the fire of the mountain. It could not have been forest fire. The smoke when the volcano is active draws down the Skagit valley. There is no question in my mind that Mt. Baker is an active volcano.

Capt. Eldridge: There can be little doubt but that the volcanic fire still smolders in Mt. Baker. The crater is southwest of the peak. Very few old settlers but are positive that the volcano is not extinct.

John Bennett, the only man on the coast who ever reached the top of Mt. Baker, except Coleman, has been interviewed by the *Reveille* as to his trip to Mt. Baker, the monarch of mountains. He informed the reporter that he came to Bellingham bay in 1859. He came from Illinois. The party who attempted the ascent of Mt. Baker consisted of himself, Coleman and Tennant. This was June, 1866. Tennant got to the snow line and was taken sick and waited until Bennett and Coleman returned. At an elevation of 10,000 feet the mercury was sixteen degrees above zero. At 9,500 feet it had been forty-four degrees above zero. The trip was a terrible one. Cans, packed at the rate of fifteen miles per hour, carried the party to the hard work. Then the jungle. The southwest side of the mountain where the ascent had necessarily to be made was very dangerous on account of avalanches and sliding ice. He says: We therefore started at daylight. There is no animal life on the mountain above the timber line but white grouse. On the south side there are indications of gold. The creek beds all show color. Among the interesting things discovered by me on the mountain was a peculiar species of *Erica* or heather. The specimens I secured had never before been found in America. It is covered with snow eight months in the year. There are three varieties of it and the blossoms are variously white, purple and yellow. I have letters from the Smithsonian Institute assuring me that the plant had never before been found on the continent. There is undoubtedly marble on the south fork. The chasms on the northwest side of the mountain are of frightful depth and it requires the strongest nerve to pass along them on the glaring ice. The top of the mountain is solid ice and snow. The timber is fine—the highest you get the finer the timber till you reach the timber line. White pine is scarce on the mountain but occasionally magnifi-

cent specimens are found. The crater lies to the south from the summit and we were not as anxious about that as to reach the top of the mountain. From the top the smoke could plainly be seen rising, and the sulphurous smell was plainly perceptible after we reached the snow line. I have seen the mountain belch fire several times. There is no question in the world about the mountain being an active volcano. It is not like Vesuvius and Etna and the terrible volcanoes of Java, but the mountain is undoubtedly still active. The glaciers are at the southwest side of the mountain. I am now seventy-eight years of age and I regard the trip to the mountain as a marked event in my life.

Capt. Thomas Stratton, who died at Port Angeles two years ago, claimed that he planted the American flag on the mountain; that he saw the huge crater emitting smoke with a sulphurous smell. The climbing of the mountain along the stupendous cliffs and the scaling of walls rising at an angle of seventy degrees and the avoidance of yawning chasms made the trip fully equal to that of an ascent of Mont Blanc. The description of the ascent of the mountain by Stratton immediately after the event is said to have been as graphic as that of Albert Smith in 1851 regarding his climbing of Mont Blanc.—*Whatcom Reveille*.

QUALITY OF FIR TIMBER.

For some time past the adaptability of Puget sound fir (the chief timber in the forests of Oregon, Washington and British Columbia and most commonly called "Oregon pine,"—Ed.) to many purposes for which other woods, and particularly pine, are used in the east, has been carefully considered by builders, engineers and others. Lumber in the east is becoming scarce and the quality of much of that cut at present is far below the high standard that is required for many kinds of work. Although iron and steel are rapidly taking the place of wood in the construction of bridges, still there is a very large amount of wooden bridge work done, and it is necessary that the timber be of the best quality.

On many roads where the wooden trestle or the composite bridge is an important factor, only white pine is used, it being impossible to procure oak or other hard timber without an excessive outlay of money. This is particularly true in the states lying in the Mississippi valley or in the lake region.

A few days ago a party of officials of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul railroad arrived on the sound, with a view of obtaining information as to the merits of fir timber for bridge building as compared with white pine. Several tests with gratifying results were made. It was found that a stick of timber six by fourteen inches and fifteen feet in length gave way only when the gauge of the hydraulic jack with which the tests were made indicated a pressure of 3,200 pounds, or showed that the stick possessed a sustaining weight of about 37,000 pounds.

A *Times* reporter yesterday, while in conversation with a gentleman who has paid considerable attention to lumber and its capabilities, was informed that the resisting power of fir is greater than that of oak. It is considered by those who have tried both woods to be infinitely superior for all heavy work to white pine.

For piling purposes it has been found to last as long as oak, and were it not for the ravages of the teredo, the piles which support the wharves and warehouses would not soon have to be renewed. At least, such is the opinion of men who have long and carefully observed the condition of fir timber when exposed to the weather and elements alone. It does not readily rot and seems to be capable of standing any amount of unfavorable conditions which usually destroy other timber.