

THE TOWN OF SAN DE FUCA.

Puget sound is a wonderful body of water, abounding in deep harbors and surrounded by a variety and quantity of natural wealth superior to that to be found in any other portion of the globe. It naturally follows that, as these great resources are developed and as population increases, many towns and cities should spring up, all of them possessing considerable resources to ensure their growth, and some of them being so situated as to ensure their becoming cities of no mean importance. The first of these to reach important size were those contiguous to the territory first developed, such as Seattle and Tacoma, but others are now claiming attention.

It is generally admitted that farther down the sound, somewhere in the region opposite the Straits of Fuca, a large city will spring up, since there is the point where railroads and ships can the most easily, cheaply and safely unite. So general is this belief and so strong is the desire to learn as much as possible on the subject, that a description of the location and surroundings of the new town of San de Fuca will be of great interest.

Whidby island extends down the sound from a point about twenty miles north of Seattle to a point directly east of Victoria, a total distance of thirty-six miles. In width it varies from one to nine miles, and, with the small island of Caamano, comprises Island county, one of the richest agricultural and timber districts of Washington. Directly opposite the center of the Straits of Fuca is Penn's cove, on the eastern side, but separated from the straits by a narrow isthmus less than a mile in width, most of which is covered by water at high tide, and the highest point of which is but twenty feet above the water. This was once a channel separating the upper and lower halves of the island, and can very easily be made again a channel by constructing a ship canal at a comparatively light expense. Penn's cove, now known as San de Fuca harbor, is a magnificent, land-locked, deep water harbor, about four miles long and one and one-half wide, more sheltered than any other of the numerous harbors on either side of the sound.

On the north side of the cove, looking south, is plotted the town of San de Fuca, on the beautiful site shown in the engraving on the preceding page. The mountains seen in the distance on the left are the beautiful Cascades. The canal will enter the cove on the right. The beauty and natural adaptability of the site for a large city are easily seen in the engraving. There are no high bluffs to obstruct access to the water, nor high hills to be overcome.

A proper understanding of the situation can not be had without giving careful study to the conditions, and the best aid to this is an accurate map of the sound country. By consulting such a map it will be seen that all other harbors accessible by rail from the east side are either too far north or south, while San de Fuca lies directly opposite the entrance from the ocean, and is the most easily, cheaply and safely reached of them all. All that is required is the opening of the short canal through the low barrier between Penn's cove and the straits. The harbor can be easily connected with the railroad systems of the mainland by a railroad down the island, crossing to Fidalgo Island by a bridge about 500 feet long across Deception pass, and thence by an easily constructed bridge across shallow water to the mainland, or by going to the mainland direct near the mouth of the Skagit, utilizing Big and Little Hope islands.

This project of making Penn's cove the central terminal point of railroads reaching Puget sound is by no means a new one. When Jay Cooke was controlling the Northern Pacific railroad enterprise, his engineers made a thorough examination of the sound country, and drove their terminal stakes on

Penn's cove. The friends of that enterprise acquired 20,000 acres of land in this vicinity, which they still hold. The engineers were of the opinion that where the proposed canal is located was once a navigable passage, and that such a channel can again be created at a small expense. This being done, Penn's cove could have no possible rival as the most desirable and advantageous point for a general railroad terminus and point of interchange of land and water traffic. Financial embarrassment took the Northern Pacific out of Jay Cooke's hands, and the managers of that road were compelled to select for the terminus the harbor most quickly and cheaply reached. But Penn's cove possesses to-day all the natural advantages recognized in it twenty years ago by those able engineers, and all that is necessary is to bring them out to render them operative and powerful.

This work has been undertaken by a number of well known business men, nearly all of Portland. The San de Fuca Ship Canal and Railway Company has been incorporated by John Marshall, Theodore Wygant, H. C. Walters, F. K. Arnold, Lee Hoffman and W. A. Rantz for the purpose of opening this canal and constructing a railroad the entire length of the island. The route of this road has already been selected, and the company has purchased many desirable tracts of land at various points along the route, as well as a large portion of the townsite of San de Fuca, and proposes to develop its property immediately. The bare announcement that a company composed of such energetic and financially able men had been formed to do this work caused the property in that town to assume a value in the eyes of men who understand the situation, and some of the choicest has already been purchased at a high figure as compared to former sales, but very low as compared to the prices it will bring even a few months hence.

San de Fuca is not merely a speculative town, for without any connection whatever with the mainland the railroad on the island will so develop that remarkably fertile region that a town of 5,000 people will quickly spring up and be supported by it. This alone makes property there possess a high prospective value, which developments will speedily convert into a reality.

It is hardly necessary to speak of the manufacturing, ship-building and other advantages to be found here. All that can be, or has been, said of any other city on the sound in this respect applies with equal, or stronger, force to San de Fuca. It requires but the developments undertaken by this company to bring them out. The first work will be to open up the resources of the island by the proposed railway and to provide at San de Fuca all the shipping and commercial facilities for handling the resultant business.

There is not now a bank in Island county, or any other of the adjuncts to business that this company purposes to at once provide. Arrangements have been perfected for the erection of large saw mills there, and for brick yards to utilize the excellent clay to be found there for building material for the city.

Though the completion of the canal will add enormously to the value of all property in the vicinity of Penn's cove, it will also be a boon to vessels going to ports further south on the sound, as by passing through the canal and Saratoga passage, east of Whidby island, they will escape the rough trip down Admiralty Inlet, which often causes much delay. In view of this fact congress may authorize the construction of this canal as a necessary improvement to navigation on the sound, in which event it would be free to all without payment of tolls. From either point of view, either as a public improvement or a private enterprise, the San de Fuca canal is a necessity of the immediate future, and as such will undoubtedly materialize.