

# KING COUNTY

BY THOMAS W. PROSCH

Prior to 1851 what is now the County of King, in the State of Washington, had been merely visited by men other than the native Indians. When Capt. George Vancouver, the British explorer, was on Puget Sound, in 1792, he spent a number of days in the vicinity, near the present Port Blakely, Port Orchard and the waters further south. Though he made no record of anything hereabouts, he marked the shore line on his map, and indented it properly where the harbor of Seattle is to be found.

When the American explorer, Capt. Charles Wilkes, was here, in 1841, he was almost as indifferent to the site of the future great city of the North Pacific Coast as Vancouver before him had been. In the published report in common use no mention is made of the bay and adjacent lands, but the bay appears on the accompanying map. Though there unmarked, it is understood that the name Elliott was given by Wilkes to the bay, as two men of that name were here with him in subordinate capacities. It would be better to discard the name Elliott entirely hereafter as unnecessary, and instead call the water in front of the city Seattle Harbor.

The Indian name for all this locality was Duwamish. The West Seattle point was Duwamish Head, the bay was Duwamish, the river and valley were Duwamish and Lake Washington was Duwamish. So also the natives were Duwamish.

The first men known to have been here were Michael T. Simmons and his party in 1845, followed about 1850 by Col. I. N. Ebey, Col. B. F. Shaw, Dr. R. N. Lonsdale, Dr. D. S. Maynard, Mr. Luther M. Collins and Mr. J. C. Holgate. The last named contemplated taking a claim near the mouth of Duwamish river, and had he done so would have been the first settler. He delayed, however, until 1853, when he found that the land he wanted had been taken by another and he instead got a place on the east side of the bay.

In September, 1851, Luther M. Collins, then living in Nisqually Valley, led a small party of men into the Duwamish Valley, where four of them took the first land claims in the county. They were Collins himself, Jacob Maple, Samuel Maple and Henry VanAsselt. Samuel Maple was the son of Jacob, and VanAsselt became his son-in-law. At the same time these men were locating in the valley, John N. Low, Leander Terry and David T. Denny were camped at Alki Point, but as they did not then and there permanently plant themselves the precedence is due to the Duwamish settlers. In fact, Low moved to Thurston county in a year or two, Terry was succeeded at Alki by his brother Charles, and Denny took a claim later at Lake Union.

This section then was in Lewis County, Oregon Territory; in 1852 it was Thurston County, Oregon Territory, and in 1853 King County, Washington Territory. The Oregon Legislature in December, 1852, created a number of new counties, among them Pierce and King. The people had asked for Steilacoom county, and a bill was introduced providing for Buchanan county. While the matter was still pending news reached Salem, the capital, of the election of Franklin Pierce as president, and of William Rufus King as vice president. This news fixed the names of these two counties, Buchanan being changed to King. The following March the officers appointed organized the county government and set the official machinery in motion that has since been working more than fifty-two years.

King county as originally created was much larger than at present, and has been diminished in area several times for the benefit of Kitsap, Pierce and Snohomish. As at present constituted it has an area of about 1900 square miles, extending from the summit of the Cascade mountains west to the mid-channel of Puget Sound, and including Vashon Island. Nature blessed this region to a remarkable degree. The general topography is favorable, there being a gentle slope and drainage to the west, with numerous rivers and valleys, including the White, Green, Cedar, Duwamish, Samamisp and Snoqualmie. The trend of these rivers and valleys, with one exception, was all towards the site of the city of Seattle, and this circumstance has in the past materially aided in the growth of the city. The lands generally were covered with timber, which at an early day made this an attractive field to the lumberman, the first steam sawmill on Puget Sound being Yesler's, put up in the winter of 1852-53. This timber resource has been of immense value in the past, and is yet as indicated by the occasional showings put forth in the trade journals and by the Chamber of Commerce. About 300,000,000 feet of lumber are cut per annum in King county and about 1,150,000,000 shingles, being about one-fifth of all the shingles cut in the state and one-eighth of all the lumber. This industry employs eight thousand men in the camps and mills of the county. There is said to be yet standing untouched and unburned about 1,200 square miles of timber land in King county, upon which there is an average of 10,000,000 feet per mile, or 12,000,000,000 feet in all. At the present rate of manufacture of lumber and shingles, equivalent to 400,000,000 feet per annum thirty years will yet be required to exhaust the timber of the county, allowing nothing either for new growth or waste. Though timber is the principal article of manufacture it is by no means the only important one, as bricks, beer, iron, ships, clothing, flour, fish, candy, other foods and many other articles combine with timber to require the labor of 20,000 operatives, receiving monthly wages amounting to \$1,350,000, and turning out products valued in the aggregate at \$65,000,000. The manufactured goods of King county exceed those of any other three counties in the state combined. In dairy products

King is far in the lead, its creameries and factories turning out 2,000,000 pounds of butter and cheese per annum, while its condensed milk factories send out enormous quantities to eager consumers in many lands. Farming is but little behind manufacturing as a resource. The principal products are hay, oats, hops, vegetables, fruits, flowers, poultry, eggs and domestic animals. Mining is also developed to a substantial degree. For thirty-five years coal has been an article of export, the number of mines increasing continually and their output with them. Eighteen million tons of coal have so far been mined, the mines yielding two and a half million tons in 1903-04. It takes big figures now to give a correct idea of the county and its seat, the city of Seattle. In the city are 150,000 inhabitants; in the county 200,000; in the state 900,000. The trade is partially expressed by the bank clearings of the city, which aggregated \$223,000,000 in 1904, and will be fully \$260,000,000 in 1905. The federal government did receive in Seattle alone \$400,000 through the postoffice in 1904, \$400,000 of internal revenue money and \$600,000 from the customs house, while the assay office has handled more than \$100,000,000 of gold since its establishment in 1898. The real estate transactions in King county aggregated only a few dollars short of twenty millions in 1904, and in 1905 will considerably exceed that figure. Without presenting the figures in detail, and merely to strengthen the assertion that the people and business of the city and county have enormously increased during the past five years it may be said that the bank deposits, bank clearings, real estate transfers, customs house receipts, postoffice receipts, city and county revenues, building operations, school children, directory names, voters, telephones and many other things have doubled in amount or number during that period, and that in some cases the percentage of gain is several hundred instead of one hundred. Even in railroads King county is great, the Great Northern having within its boundaries 48 miles, the Columbia & Puget Sound 51 miles and the Northern Pacific 195 miles, while of cable and electric lines there are 140 miles, or 434 miles in all. Roughly, this is one mile of railway for each 4½ miles of territory, and one mile for each 460 inhabitants.

King county is blessed in many ways. Being on the slope of the Cascade mountains, from 4,000 to 8,000 feet in height, it has an abundance of water supplying the rivers before named, and in addition many lakes, the principal ones being Washington, Samamish, Union and Cedar. From this source the finest drinking water is to be obtained in quantity sufficient for a city greater than London and New York combined. These same waters furnish also enormous power, which is already used to light the towns, move the cars and run the machinery of a great population. Between these streams, lakes and forests there is great sport in fishing and hunting. As if these were not enough, there is magnificent scenery and health resorts of attractive character. The best passes through the mountains are also in King county, and to this fact is owing in large measure the passage of the railroads through them instead of over passes to the north or south. Granite, sandstone, gold, lead, silver, copper and other minerals are found and got out. Taken in all respects there is probably no portion of the United States more resourceful than the state of Washington, and King county is the heart and best part of the state. Even in climate it is unsurpassed. In Seattle the temperature doesn't get below 20 degrees one winter in five, nor above 90 degrees one summer in five. The ordinary extremes are 28 and 88 degrees respectively in winter and summer. It is quite infrequent that in 24 hours there is variation of 20 degrees. The rainfall ranges from 29 inches in a year to 44, averaging 37 in a long term of years. There is more rain and cold on the mountain sides, though, than in the city. There is comparatively little wind, and almost no thunder and lightning. Considering the latitude, between 47 and 48 degrees, no county in the world has a more favored climate than that of King county—so mild, temperate, equable and healthful. While the county seat is the main town, there are others of importance, places, in fact, that would be considered large and of prominence were they not so overshadowed by the greater city. The chief among these other towns is Ballard, with 12,000 inhabitants, Georgetown, Burton, Columbia, West Seattle, Kirkland, Richmond, Renton, Kent, Auburn, Issaquah, Enumclaw, Bothell, Black Diamond, Newcastle, Franklin, North Bend, Humphrey and Alki Point.

The future of King county is assured. At one time it was the least of the little group of eight counties in Washington Territory. In the beginning it was slow in progress, owing chiefly to war. Thereafter it moved on with increased and increasing rapidity. One after another it passed the other counties on its way to the front, taking the lead when about thirty years of age. During the years since it has not only lengthened that lead—as evidenced by census, vote, assessment, trade—but the whole world has come to know it, and to acknowledge it with the utmost good feeling. The fifty years past have done much for King county, have given her an average of 4,000 new people each twelvemonth, but the fifty years coming will do infinitely more, for they will add 40,000 per annum, the year 1955 finding in the present limits of the county of King more than 2,000,000 souls, finding Tacoma and Seattle one city and that city Seattle, finding the state of Washington one of the three or four greatest commonwealths of the American Union, and finding Puget Sound the scene of vaster shipping interests and commerce than are to be found today in any part of the world.