

BELLINGHAM & NORTHERN RAILWAY

VALUATION SECTIONS WASHINGTON 1, 1A, 1B.

The Bellingham & Northern Railway, which extends from Bellingham, thru Sumas to Glacier, had its inception about 1872 in the construction of a rail line from coal mines, long since abandoned, located about where the present enginehouse and shops are situated in Bellingham, to bunkers at tidewater in the vicinity of Sehome Dock. This line was one of the first railroads built in the Puget Sound Country.

Mr. D. O. Mills, then of San Francisco, later of New York, who with other San Francisco men were the operators of the Northern Commercial Company, which was widely known in the trade of the early days of Alaska, controlled the operations under which this railroad originated and had acquired great quantities of land and coal and timber properties in Whatcom County.

The Bellingham Bay and British Columbia Railroad Company was incorporated under the general laws of the State of California in 1883, and under this corporation was built the line from Bellingham to Glacier. The Waterfront, or Belt Line Railroad, extending from a connection with the Bellingham Bay and British Columbia in the vicinity of Sehome Wharf to Squalicum Junction, was built by the Bellingham Terminals and Railway Company, also a California Corporation, for which articles were filed in 1909.

By deeds executed on October 21st, 1912, both the Bellingham Bay and British Columbia Railroad Company and the Bellingham Terminals and Railway Company conveyed their property to the Bellingham and Northern Railway Company, a Washington corporation, under articles filed October 17th, 1912, controlled by the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railway Co. This latter company on December 31st, 1918, conveyed its property to the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railway Company, after which time the lines in question have been operated as the Bellingham Division.

The Bellingham & Northern is located entirely in Whatcom County, Washington, extending from Bellingham, thru Sumas on the International Border, to a terminus at Glacier.

There is no owned rail connection between this line and the C.M. & St.P. tracks. Cars are transferred to Seattle by means of car barges operated in connection with car ferry landings, the landing at Bellingham having been established by the Milwaukee Terminal Railway Company in 1912.

Consideration has been given to matter of making rail connection but nothing has been done to this end except that reconnaissance surveys have been made with view of connecting with the Everett Branch at Everett. Rail connections may be

had with main line thru either the Great Northern or Northern Pacific Railways.

The records of early surveys and of construction by the original companies are not available and very little information can be given on this subject.

The town of New Whatcom was platted by the Railway Company in 1883 and in 1890 the Bellingham Bay and British Columbia conveyed its holdings, other than railroad property, to the Bellingham Bay Improvement Company and thereafter, so far as records show, confined itself mainly to constructing its railroad to open up timber, coal and mineral property.

Sometime after the railroad was incorporated the original coal mine track was extended as far as Strandell. The date of this construction is not definitely known but deeds for numerous parcels of right of way show date of 1889. In the year 1891 the railroad was extended from Strandell to Sumas in order that a connection might be made with the Canadian Pacific and thereby permit of thru service by that Company thru the use of this railroad from Sumas to Bellingham, and what is now the Great Northern from Bellingham to Seattle. The Canadian Pacific's thru freight service was inaugurated in either the latter part of 1891 or the early part of 1892. Their thru passenger service was inaugurated in July 1892. Inauguration of this thru passenger service was made the occasion of a great public celebration in New Whatcom and it was in anticipation of this, and of future business, that the Bellingham Bay and British Columbia erected its hotel building adjacent to its depot on Railroad Avenue, which building was demolished in 1924.

The owners of the property also had in mind a line to Spokane, and an extension was built from Sumas to Maple Falls in 1901, and in 1902 and 1903 was built on to Glacier. Surveys were also made beyond Glacier, following up the north fork of the Hocksack River, crossing the divide and reaching the headwaters of the Methow River. After some months of investigation and the expenditure of considerable money the route was abandoned. The branch line from Hampton to Lynden was also constructed in the year 1903. The Waterfront, or Belt Line Railroad in Bellingham, was built in 1909 and 1910 by the Bellingham Terminals and Railway Company, and in 1915 and 1916 the Bellingham and Northern Company constructed the branch line from Goshen to Kulshan (formerly Welcome). In 1916 the latter Company also built a connection at Sumas with the British Columbia Electric Company.

As originally constructed the main line extended from Sehome Dock easterly thru the now city of Bellingham, with maximum grade east bound of 2.53% to Squaticum Junction, west bound maximum grade being 2.06%. From Squaticum Junction to Sumas the line passed thru heavily timbered country now cleared and devoted to farming, dairying and poultry raising. From Sumas the line climbs to Hilltop Siding, in the vicinity of Columbia, on varying grades, the maximum of which is 3.19%, dropping down to the valley of the north fork

of the Nooksack River, in the vicinity of Maple Falls, following this valley to the terminus at Glacier. The principal commodities handled are logs and forest products, with some limestone from Balfour and Limestone Junction, located between Sumas and Maple Falls, destined to the plant of the Olympic-Portland Cement Company at Bellingham.

The Utah-Idaho Sugar Company have located a plant at Bellingham and the raising of sugar beets in the valley between Bellingham and Sumas, has been added to the agricultural activities.

The line was originally laid with light steel, some portions of which on the heavier grade, between Lambertson and Hilltop, having been replaced in 1923 with 85# relay rail from the main line. The Waterfront, or Belt Line, between Bellingham and Squaticum Creek, was originally laid with 70# rail and the branch line from Goshen to Kulshan with 65# rail. The Goshen-Kulshan Branch crosses both the main stream and the north Fork of the Nooksack River. The main line likewise crosses the main stream near Everson and the north fork at Warnick; all crossings being by means of timber Howe truss spans.

The Nooksack River and its forks are turbulent mountain streams, carrying in flood stages considerable volume of water and debris, and occasioning great expense in protection work.

The first locomotive used on the Bellingham Division was one which came around Cape Horn in a sailing ship. It was used by Mr. Mills in grading the sand lots in San Francisco in the early fifties. It had been modernized to some extent and was still in use as late as 1910. It is said that Mr. Mills considered this the foundation of his fortune and would not permit it to be scrapped as long as he was in charge of the railroad.

The Bellingham Division is now operated under the supervision of a Superintendent with headquarters at Bellingham.