

## BURLINGTON TRANSPORTATION

### The Railroad

In the summer of 1890 the first train passed through Burlington on the Seattle and Northern track. This route ran between Sedro-Woolley and Burlington over the route now occupied by the Skagit Valley branch of the Great Northern. The same year, the Great Northern route was surveyed and it was completed in 1891.

The advent of the railroad gave a great impetus to the settlement of Burlington and vicinity, for it offered transportation for men and merchandise. The logging and farming districts had felt the need of a good railroad for some time and therefore welcomed its coming with great hopes for the future.

The first depot of the Seattle and Northern was erected in 1890 at the crossing of Anacortes Avenue. The first building of the Great Northern was constructed the following year, a mere shack at the Orange Avenue crossing. On a Sunday mornign a few years later, the people of Burlington awoke to find that they had a new railway station, the fine structure which had stood at Belleville, two miles north on the Great Northern line. Mr. Hill, president of the Great Northern, had arrived at Burlington the evening before and,

proceeding north to Belleville, had invited Samuel Bell, on whose land the station stood, to go with him in his private car to Bellingham. Mr. Bell accepted and had the pleasure of dining with Mr. Hill in Bellingham. But after Mr. Bell had gotten safely away, workmen arrived and proceeded to move the building off its foundation. Then they loaded it on a flat car and brought it to Burlington where the fine structure was to grace our fair city for several succeeding years. There was not a more surprised man in the county than Samuel Bell when he arrived home the next morning. This building did service as a union station until it was burned and the present structure was erected.

The railroad continued to grow and the town continued to grow until, with a population of several hundred, it became one of the greatest railroad centers in the county.

The Burlington Journal, a pioneer county paper, published the following in the June 1, 1899, issue:

"No town in the county or state enjoys better railroad facilities than Burlington--in fact, being so centrally located, it is naturally and unavoidably the railroad shipping point for the greater portion of produce, stock, etc., raised in Burlington and Skagit county. While Sedro-Woolley enjoys possibly a greater traffic in shingles and timber, Burlington is a transfer point and ships more produce than any other locality. This fact is easily attested by the railroad agents. Timber soon disappears, and, as had been proven in this Northwest territory, prosperity for a town disappears with it. Land and agriculture are permanent and prosperity increases with its development. While Burlington is surrounded on two sides by vast forests of fir and cedar, it does not depend upon timber alone for future wealth, but the great farming and dairy section at our doors is a guarantee of permanency."

The railroads have tapped the sources of agricultural production in the vicinity by making possible the easy transportation of the yield of the fields, while at the same time they have made easy of access articles of consumption.

In 1899, a few years after the railroad was first put through, there were four passenger trains daily between Seattle, Whatcom, and British Columbia. The number of daily trains at one time reached six on the Seattle line, three each way, and four on the Skagit Valley branch, two being trains to and from Anacortes. At the present time there are only four passenger trains on the Seattle line, two each way, and none on the Skagit Valley branch.

In January 1903, the Great Northern bridge over the Skagit River south of Burlington, collapsed when a freight train was passing over it. The engine was nearly across when the bridge gave way, but the bank of the river was so steep that the cab was entirely submerged. Four cars, loaded with shingles, also went into the water. The engineer and fireman were killed, but the brakeman escaped serious injury. The bridge was known to be weak and was being repaired at the time, but was not considered at all dangerous.

The railroad has been a very important factor in the rapid development of the city of Burlington and of the farming country of which our fair city forms the chief center.

#### THE INTERURBAN

Another important addition to the transportation facilities of the community was the completion of an interurban by the

Pacific Northwest Traction Company (P.N.T.) in August, 1912. This line ran from Bellingham through Blanchard and Burlington to Mount Vernon. Four different cars, running hourly, carried on the passenger service between these cities.

The company carried on both passenger and freight service, going as far south as Mt. Vernon, where they would change cargo and passengers with the interurbans plying between Seattle and Mt. Vernon. The freight cars would leave Bellingham at 4:00 o'clock in the morning and would arrive back in Bellingham in the afternoon.

A branch line ran to Sedro Woolley from Burlington. The interurban depot, erected in 1912, was located on Walnut Street where in the Puget Sound Power and Light Company now resides.

The passenger service continued until 1928, when, owing to the lack of business, the passenger cars were taken off the line. The freight service continued until 1932 when it was also taken off the service.

The tracks have been taken up recently.

#### RIVER TRANSPORTATION

The Skagit River, navigable for thirty miles, provided another important means of transportation. Captain McDonald with his steamer, the "Harvester", provided a cheap means of transportation for the farmers living near the Skagit River. Captain McDonald piloted the "Harvester" as far upstream as Hamilton, located eleven miles east of Sedro Woolley.

The Burlington wharf on the Skagit was located at a point known as Siwash point, about two miles southeast of Burlington. Mr. McDonald, with the Skagit River Navigation And Trading Company, also operated from Mt. Vernon to Seattle. He started his business soon after the turn of the century and carried on a very successful business until a few years ago.

#### THE STAGES

Burlington is connected with Vancouver B. C. and Seattle by the North Coast Stage Company, operating its buses on the Pacific Highway. This company maintains hourly services each way, with the depot at the corner of Fairhaven Avenue and the Pacific Highway.

The Anacortes, Sedro Woolley stage company maintains a schedule through Burlington using the same depot as the North Coast Company. This line runs through Burlington on one trip and through Clear Lake on another trip. It connects with the North Coast buses at Mount Vernon, thus giving Burlington very satisfactory stage service.

#### THE HIGHWAYS

Even as Burlington enjoys many other exceptional facilities she is not behind in her share of highways and good roads. Burlington is located on the United States Highway No. 99, stretching from Vancouver, B. C. to San Diego, California. This highway runs just to the west of Burlington. A new road from Burlington to Bellingham, the Samish highway, has been

recently completed. Previous to the building of this road, the highway stretched across to the water on the route known as the Chuckanut Drive. The Pacific Highway, running over the Chuckanut Drive, was completed about 1921.

Another highway, part of the proposed Anacortes to Spokane highway, runs through Burlington. This section was completed and dedicated in 1936. It runs from Burlington to Sedro Wolley in the east and to Anacortes in the west.

Beside these two highways Burlington has an exceptionally well-laid street plan. Some of the streets are being repaved, and bettered in other ways, at the present time.