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Everett's Boomtown Beginnings 1891-1892

The rapid development that brought Everett into being came with a price and nowhere is this better told than in the newspapers and photographs of the time. It can be imagined that many families, arriving at the town site with little more than hopes and dreams, found that their new home clearly resembled a battlefield. But their excitement with creating a new city is clearly evident. The following news items tell the tale. First is from the *Everett News*, followed by three essays written by children, published in the *Everett Times*. This People's History was contributed by Margaret Riddle.

Blown up and Fired

Everett News, December 17, 1891

“Boom, Boom, all over the city. They were not salutes, nor the heralding in of Christmas, but formed part of the work of tearing down Port Gardner for the building up of Everett. They are blasting in all sections of the city, and great tree trunks and roots are constantly making their way out of the earth with a crash. Some of the charges are heavy ones, too, and as a consequence the city is often well shaken up by the discharges. One blast especially shook nearly every building throughout the city yesterday.

At night the city seems to be on fire at its edges. The city at present is cleared in the center, and the blasting is carried on in a circle around the inhabited portion, as it were. After the work of the giant powder is over the torch is applied and when night comes on, Everett appears to be almost enveloped in flames. Some of the burning trees form very pretty sights. Immense trunks will be seen a red hot mass with flames pouring out from the top. In other cases the flames creep up tall trees and locate for a while on the very top, making a sort of torch. The blast and blaze are doing rapid work in the clearing of Everett lands.”

Early in 1892, Everett school children wrote their accounts, as follows.

ESSAYS ON EVERETT.

The School Children Have Their Say -- Children Usually Tell the Truth.

Everett Times Vol. 1 No. 12, March 3, 1892, p. 1

“A few days ago the school children of Everett were asked to write essays on Everett ... The *Times* has been put in possession of three of those compositions and has concluded to publish them.

Thomas Spencer, aged fourteen years, composed the following:

“It is wonderful to walk the streets of Everett and think just one year ago there were but one or two houses and now there are about seven or eight hundred.

All the land that is cleared now was all covered with timber about a year ago. The timber they cleared from the land has been cut up into firewood, both for family use and for steamboats. They are building sidewalks all over Everett. They get all their lumber from Tacoma; they bring it by water. They put it on big scows and

get a tugboat to tow it to Everett. There it is removed from the scow and put into use.

There are about six steamers running regularly every day; besides there are two or three steamers coming from Tacoma every day with rafts of lumber, and the Seattle and Montana Railroad is running through Everett, and the "Three S" Railroad will soon be finished.

They are talking of putting a motor line in. It will start at the Bay and extend to Snohomish river, and the fare will be only ten cents; and Everett will probably be a great manufacturing town. It probably will be the largest on the Pacific Coast.

It is starting well. They have a very large paper mill at Lowell and Lowell will probably be joined to Everett inside of a year; and they have a nail factory at the Bay.

The barge works is situated about half way between East Everett and the Bay. They have a fine place for the barge works. They have about one hundred men working at the steel barge works. They have a large hotel and a small store. They have two pile drivers driving piles and they want to get another. They have already got a large dock. They get most of their lumber from Tacoma.

It is a horrible looking place now, but they will soon have it planked, and then it will be a beautiful place, for it is so level.

They have a steamer every day with a load of lumber or two. The whaleback steamers are all the 'go' nowadays."

Bessie Secrest, a little ten-year old Miss, wrote the following:

"Everett is composed of all kinds of inhabitants. It was divided into two parts but now it is all together. It is said to be the largest city on Puget Sound yet. It is also composed of log huts, tents, and about everything that you can sleep in. Everett is all stumps and mud about, for there's nothing else hardly for it to be, for there are a great many trees here and men are trying to get them out if possible. Engineers are surveying all the land and staking it off. There are nothing here but boarding houses and stores. I would just as lieve they would take their saloons and run away.

The whaleback caused a great excitement. It is a very large boat, being 265 feet in lengthy, 36 feet in width, and 16 feet of it is under water. It is divided neatly into six rooms and very nice ones they are. It was greatly praised by folks from Seattle, Tacoma, and many cities on Puget Sound: even from over to the Indian reservation they came to see the whaleback. I to not know what they thought of it, but they would stand for a long time and mutter some words that no on could understand.

Well, Everett has a railroad track, on which freight trains pass, and carry loads of lumber and brick, stone and dirt, with great difficulty; there are also two passenger trains which come from Seattle and bring crowds of people to see Everett. Everett has a steel barge works and it has much work to do yet before it is finished, and I guess it is going to be a bit thing too.

Then there are the lumber yards over at the Bay, and they are rapidly increasing, in buying lumber and selling it again; they have a great many men working at the lumber yards.

There is the paper mill over at East Everett, and it is a great help to the town, too, for it published papers and other things. There are the mail works, which are rapidly increasing. The nail factory is a large building. There are two land offices over at the Bay; their names are Ruckers and I don't know the other. I guess, maybe there are a few ones at East Everett. There are also four hotels which are large buildings. They have a good many inhabitants here now, and I think there will be more. There is a doctor's house here."

“Here is Willie Powers’ essay, and he is a little boy only ten years of age:

EVERETT, Wash., Feb. 9, 1892.

I will tell you all about this place. Everett is situated on a peninsula. There is a nice river along one side and a nice bay of Puget Sound on the other. The river flows into the bay. Behind the bay are nice mountains and looking over the river there is a nice range called the Cascade range. There is a large hill in between the river and the bay. Men are working grading the streets and avenues. Hewitt avenue is graded from the river and the bay, but they left a few stumps in the middle. The grade of Hewitt is much better than Pacific Avenue.

There are two railroads going into Everett; one on the edge off the bay and the other is in the middle. They have made a large barge works on the Point; it is going to make iron sea vessels. That is going to make a part of Everett, and the large paper mills at Lowell, also. These railroads are going to make Everett, too. There are three hotels and fifty restaurants. There are nice river boats that run from Seattle to Everett and to Snohomish sometimes. Snohomish has no bay; it is only on the side of the Snohomish River.

The animals that are working are mostly donkeys and a few horses too. Men are clearing land as fast as they can. There are two more banks going up. There is a sash and door factory. It had a load of machinery going down the river and it struck a boom and all the machinery went to the bottom of the river, and so the sash and door factory is not working any more.”



Pacific-Chestnut Community, Everett, late 1891

Courtesy Everett Public Library (Neg. 0038)



Broadway School, Everett, early 1892

Courtesy Everett Public Library (Neg. 0079)



Hewitt Avenue, riverside, Everett, March 2, 1892

Photo by King and Baskerville, Courtesy Everett Public Library (Neg. 0050)



Grandpa Stewart's Payday Party for Kids, Everett, ca. 1895

Courtesy Everett Public Library (Neg. 0148)



Sibary King Hotel, Market Street, Everett, April 1892

Photo by King and Baskerville April 1892 Courtesy Everett Public Library (Neg. 0062)



Launching of whaleback *City of Everett*, October 24, 1894

Photo by Herman Siewert, Courtesy Everett Public Library (Neg. 0143)



Whaleback *City of Everett*, 1895

Photo by David Ewing, Courtesy Everett Public Library (Neg. 0138)

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