

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Washington	
COUNTY: Whatcom	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
MAR 16 1972	

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
Gamwell House

AND OR HISTORIC:  
Gamwell House

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
1001 - 16th Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Bellingham

STATE: Washington

CODE: 53

COUNTY: Whatcom

CODE: 073

CONG. DISTRICT # 2  
Honorable Lloyd Meeds

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <input type="checkbox"/> Comments

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
Marie M. Vosti

STREET AND NUMBER:  
1001 - 16th Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Bellingham

STATE:  
Washington

CODE:  
53

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Whatcom County Courthouse, Auditor's Office

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Whatcom County Courthouse

CITY OR TOWN:  
Bellingham

STATE:  
Washington

CODE:  
53

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY:  
 Federal  
 State  
 County  
 Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

STATE:

CODE:

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: Washington

COUNTY: Whatcom

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**7 DESCRIPTION**

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

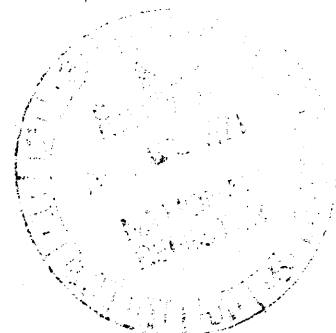
DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Gamwell House, built in the last years of the Victorian era, was designed by the architectural firm of Longstaff and Black, an eastern firm who had come from the Boston area to the Bellingham Bay real estate boom. The Gamwell House is probably the best example of the many fine Victorian homes that they designed in this area. It is a three story wood home with brick and concrete bulkhead, and has an extremely spacious interior, with only nine rooms within the three floors. The house took two years to complete, from 1890 to 1892, and was built with the best materials available. Plumbing, gas, electricity, and heating was installed.

The majority of the rooms had wood panelling in various hardwoods, and oak, mahogany, and redwood. The numerous fireplaces were flanked by specially designed mirrors. The central core of the house was the three story staircase, with beautifully carved ornamentation. Tall glass windows in the stairwell were set with colorful art glass patterns of floral arrangements.

The furnishings belonging to the Gamwells were mainly family heirlooms, so that the home was elegantly appointed with fine mahogany bookcases, gold leaf mirrors, Oriental rugs, and numerous other pieces. The home was occupied by the Gamwell family from 1892 until 1956, and they made very few changes to the house. The house is presently occupied by Mrs. William Vosti, and she plans to leave the home as unchanged as possible. Many of the original furnishings are still with the house, so that it retains the same character as it had when it was completed in 1892.

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**SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian |  16th Century |  18th Century |  20th Century  
 15th Century |  17th Century |  19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **1892**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                      |   |  |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education   | <input type="checkbox"/> Political                | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Phi-            | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry    | losophy   | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention   | <input type="checkbox"/> Science                  | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape   | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture                | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | Architecture                         | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social/Human- | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature  | itarian   | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Military    | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater                  | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            | <input type="checkbox"/> Music       | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation           | _____                                    |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Roland Greene Gamwell was from a prominent New England family, and he had come to the Pacific Northwest in 1889 after taking an engineering degree from Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1886. He had been employed to survey and extend the interurban rail system around Tacoma, Washington. There he met Nelson Bennett, a high financier with much interests around the Bellingham Bay area, and Gamwell was intrigued with the proposed development of the town of Fairhaven, now a part of Bellingham. Gamwell arrived in Fairhaven on August 15, 1889, and commissioned the Gamwell House to be built in 1890, by the architectural firm of Longstaff and Black, who had been partners since they had left the Boston area, and whose firm had been commissioned to design the fabulous Fairhaven Hotel and many other fine residences and buildings of the area. The house was to be one of the most elegant of the Victorian mansions built in the Pacific Northwest, and was of more progressive design, with extremely spacious rooms, a stairwell three stories high, lined with windows done in colorful Victorian "art glass" patterns, walls of fine wood panelling, and fancy gas lamps throughout the house. The large curving staircase was handcarved of hardwoods, and the Italian carver-craftsmen were brought from employment in Seattle, where they had been decorating the interurban railway stations with their art. Under the staircase, was built a niche with a raised platform, for the location of a string orchestra for private concerts.

The house took two years to build, and growing impatient, Gamwell returned to New England to marry his fiancée, Helen Thacher, and he soon brought her to Fairhaven. The young couple moved into the Fairhaven Hotel with all their family heirlooms, silver, linens, and fine furnishings, until the house was completed in July, 1892. They opened the house with the most elegant housewarming party that the area residents had ever seen, and thus began a period of dignified social life and refined culture that had been lacking in this area.

The Bellingham Bay area had been settled by men of the lumber, coal, and fishing trade, and had experienced real estate booms and busts, and gold rush fever. By the 1890's, the businessmen adventurers such as Nelson Bennett, James Wardner, and Peter Larson, were heavily invested in real estate in the

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# 8 (continued)

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Washington	
COUNTY Whatcom	
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ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	MAR 16 1972

(Number all entries)

area, and were seeking to bring the western terminus of several intercontinental railroads into the area. Along with these men, the waterfront along Bellingham Bay was home for men of less distinguished names, with Welsh, English, and Irish miners, with Scandinavians and Chinese laborers, with Indians and the "ladies" of the extensive red light district, and overlooking this mixed group of people, the Gamwell House stood on the hillside above the bay.

Mr. Gamwell founded the Fairhaven Yacht Club in 1894, sponsored a champion whist team that played up and down the coast, and began a number of men's clubs such as the Kulshan Club and a chapter of the Elks. The Gamwells held lawn tennis matches at their home, and people eagerly responded to invitations for cotillions and concerts in the Gamwell House. Mr. Gamwell brought about the establishment of the Fairhaven and Bellingham Public Libraries. He was also noted as a horticulturalist of new varieties of roses, and the home was surrounded by his rose gardens. Mrs. Gamwell was often the official hostess for any notables that passed through Bellingham and William Howard Taft and Samuel Clemens were guests in the Gamwell House. The Gamwells made a first and continuing contribution of an elegant and cultured social life to a boom town that sorely needed such an influence. This ended in 1944 when Mrs. Gamwell died in the house built for her, and in 1956, in his sixty-seventh summer, after a prominent business and social life, Mr. Gamwell passed away at the age of ninety-six.

The house was left unoccupied for awhile, and the present owner, Mrs. William Vosti, a librarian at Western Washington State College, is attempting with the encouragement of Mrs. Glen Hyatt of Vancouver, B. C., the only child of the Gamwells, to restore the house and all of the original furnishings, just as it was in 1892 when Roland and Helen Gamwell gave their first garden party to announce the arrival of a new social life to the raw little communities on Bellingham Bay.

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Connelly, Dolly. "The Roland Gamwell Home", article later published in the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, April 2, 1967.

McDonald, Lucille. Where the Washingtonians Lived. Superior Press, Seattle Washington, 1969.

Roth, Lottie Roeder, Supervising Editor. History of Whatcom County, two volumes. Pioneer Historical Publishing Company, Chicago and Seattle, 1926.

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES				
CORNER	LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	°	'	"	°	'	"	48	43	26
NE	°	'	"	°	'	"	122	29	44
SE	°	'	"	°	'	"			
SW	°	'	"	°	'	"			

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **0.3 acres**

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

**11. FORM PREPARED BY** under supervision of Susan H. L. Barrow, Liaison Officer

NAME AND TITLE:  
by: **Charlotte V. Schneider, Research Assistant**

ORGANIZATION: **Whatcom Museum of History and Art**      DATE: **May 1, 1969**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**121 Prospect Street**

CITY OR TOWN: **Bellingham**      STATE: **Washington 98225**      CODE: **53**

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National     State     Local

Name Charles H. Odegaard  
Charles H. Odegaard

Title Director - Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission

Date August 27, 1971

**NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Ernest Allen Connelly  
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date **MAR 16 1972**

ATTEST:

William M. ...  
Keeper of The National Register

Date **JAN 3 1972**

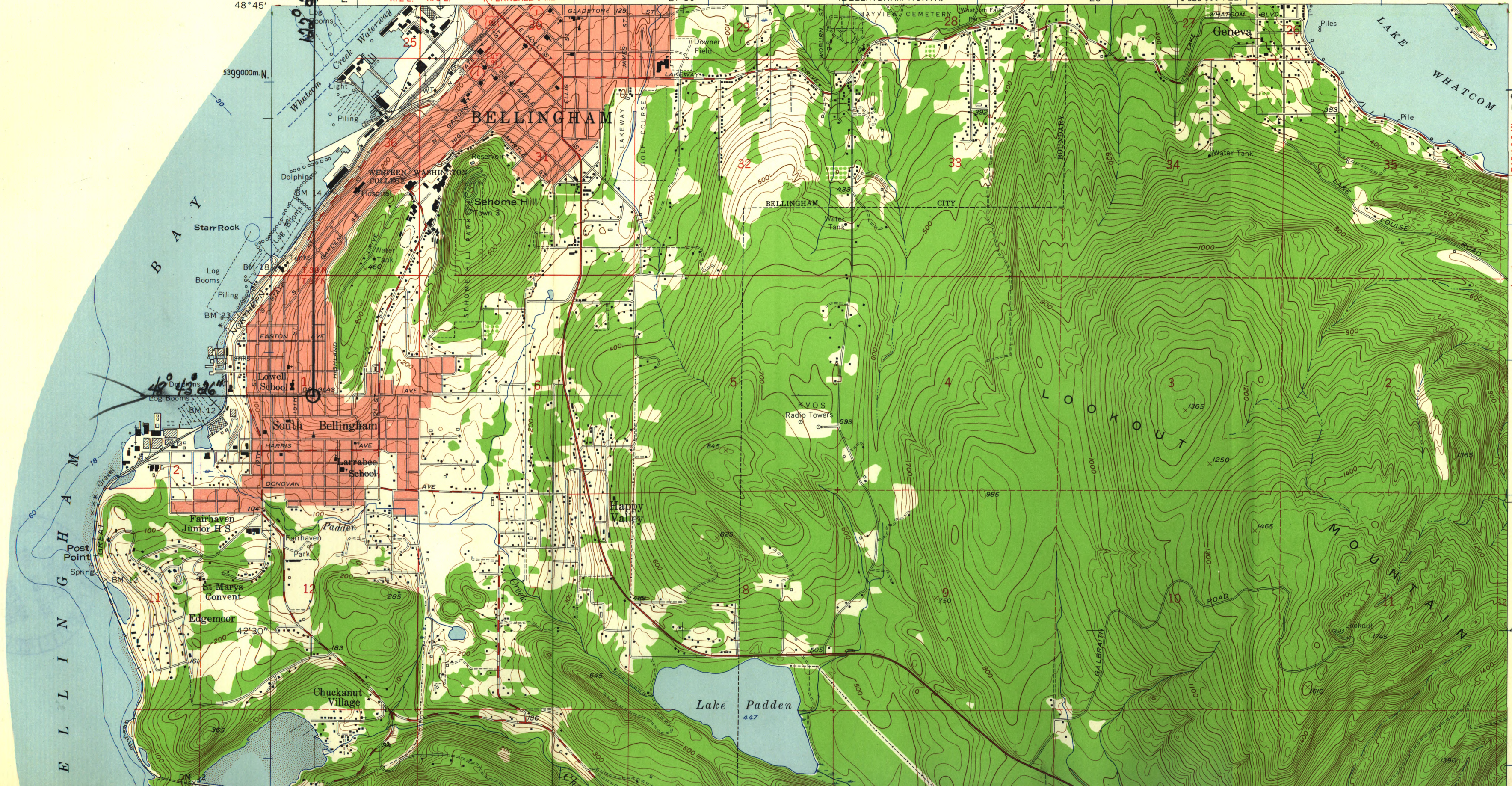
NO UTM CD SEE INSTRUCTIONS

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
COAST AND GEODETIC SURVEY

BELLINGHAM SOUTH QUADRANGLE  
WASHINGTON  
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)  
NW/4 SAMISH LAKE 15' QUADRANGLE

122°30' 48'45" W. 7000m.E. R.2E. R.3E. BLAINE 21 MI. FERDALE 9 MI. 27'30" (BELLINGHAM NORTH) 25' SILVER BEACH 1.2 MI. 1 620 000 FEET 122°22'30" 48°45'



T.38 N.  
T.37 N.

42'30"

447

1380