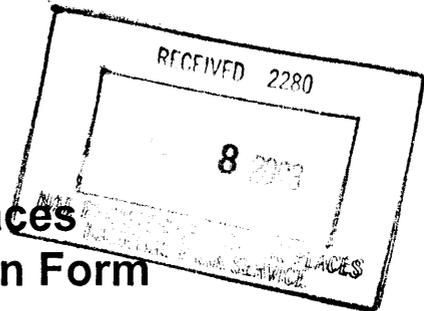


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



640-0808

National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form is for use in documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

New Submission Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham, Washington, 1882 - 1915

B. Associated Historic Contexts

(name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographic area, and chronological period for each)

Railroad Speculation and its Effect on the Early Towns of Bellingham, 1882 - 1900

Consolidation and Commercial Growth of Bellingham's Central Business District, 1900 - 1915

C. Form Prepared by

name/title Kathryn Franks, Development /Historic Preservation Specialist

organization City of Bellingham, Planning and Community Development Department date April 2003

street & number 114 W. Magnolia Street, Suite 501 telephone (360) 676-6880 ext. 209

city or town Bellingham state WA zip code 98225

D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Planning and Evaluation. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

7-16-03

Signature of certifying official

Date

Washington State Historic Preservation Office
State or Federal agency and bureau

I, hereby, certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

8/24/03

Signature of the Keeper of the National Register

Date of Action

Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham,
Washington, 1882 - 1915

Name of Multiple Property Listing

WASHINGTON
State

Table of Contents for Written Narrative

Provide the following information on continuation sheets. Cite the letter and the title before each section of the narrative. Assign page numbers according to the instructions for continuation sheets in *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 16B). Fill in page numbers for each section in the space below.

	Page Numbers
E. Statement of Historic Contexts (If more than one historic context is documented, present them in sequential order.)	1
F. Associated Property Types (Provide description, significance, and registration requirements.)	19
G. Geographical Data	24
H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods (Discuss the methods used in developing the public property listing.)	24
I. Major Bibliographical References (List major written works and primary location of additional documentation: State Historic Preservation Office, other State agency, Federal agency, local government, university, or other, specifying repository.)	26

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham, Washington, 1882 - 1915

Whatcom County, Washington

Section E Page 1

E. Statement of Historic Contexts

Introduction

Commercial buildings in the Central Business District (CBD) of Bellingham, Washington that meet the basic registration requirements set forth in this document in *Section F: Part IV* are eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places under *Criterion A* through their association with the city of Bellingham's historical commercial development. The period of significance is defined as 1882 - 1915 and represents an era of significant growth in Bellingham's CBD.

Commercial buildings within the documentation area are also eligible under *Criterion C*, as they are representative of the forms, styles, and/or methods of construction used for retail and other commercial purposes during the period of significance. Some may also be eligible if they are representative of the work of a notable architect or builder.

Commercial buildings within the documentation area may also be eligible with an associative significance under *Criterion B*, as a property that best represents the life a person that is significant to the growth and development of the city of Bellingham.

The area for the Multiple Property Documentation (MPD) consists of a concentration of commercial buildings located in Bellingham's CBD. The CBD area is defined, for these purposes, as the-core commercial district of what was historically the town of New Whatcom (the consolidated towns of Whatcom and Sehome).

Commercial buildings are defined as frame or masonry structures of one or more stories, with commercial bays at the ground or street level that were designed to serve a number of uses including but not limited to mercantile and grocery stores, restaurants, bars or saloons, bath houses, barber shops, laundries, theaters, and automobile dealerships. In the case of buildings with two or more stories, the upper floors were often designed for residential purposes such as high-end hotels, single room occupancy hotels, or apartments; as professional offices for dentists, doctors, and lawyers; or as meeting and/or dance halls. While a number of these buildings exist in other areas of the city, a preponderance were built within the CBD.

Bellingham's CBD consists of single and multi-story commercial buildings of frame and masonry construction dating from the mid-1880s to the present. Buildings constructed during the period of significance (1882 - 1915) range from one to seven stories and vary from non-descript to high-style architecture representing Greek Revival, Queen Anne, Beaux Arts, Richardsonian Romanesque, Renaissance Revival and Second Empire influences. Areas surrounding the CBD consist of a combination

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham, Washington, 1882 - 1915

Whatcom County, Washington

Section E Page 2

E. Statement of Historic Contexts (cont.)

of industrial, public, religious, and residential buildings, with individual and clustered commercial buildings scattered throughout the city.

Related Property Types¹

Commercial buildings constructed during the period of significance in Bellingham's CBD exist in various forms. For the purposes of this MPD and the determination of eligibility of future nominations, the Commercial Building Type has been divided into two sub-types: Multi-storied Commercial Buildings and Single-storied Commercial Buildings.

Multi- and Single-storied Commercial Buildings share some similarities. Typically, in the 19th century storefronts consisted of single or double doors flanked by large display windows. The entrance was often recessed to increase merchandise display space as well as to protect customers from inclement weather. In the case of Multi-storied Commercial Buildings, a door providing access to the upper floors from the exterior was often located to the side of the commercial space. Thin structural members of cast iron or wood, rather than masonry piers, usually framed the storefront.

Storefront windows were raised off the ground by wood, cast iron, or pressed metal panels or bulkheads. Frequently, a transom or series of fixed glazed lights consisting of single or multiple panes of glass were placed above each window and door. The signboard above the storefront (the fascia covering the structural beam) was a prominent part of the building.

During the late 19th century, canvas awnings (or in some cases tin or wooden canopies) were added to shade storefronts. Iron fronts were often added to existing buildings to update their appearance.

Except for expanding the display window area to the maximum extent possible and increasing the use of canvas awnings, few major technical innovations in storefront design were made from the 1850s through 1900. The storefronts and parapets of Single-storied Commercial Buildings were often given less detail, as the most important purpose of some of these buildings was to defray the cost of land that was likely to increase in value, and thus at some future time support a larger, more profitable building.

During the first decades of the 20th century there was an increased use of decorative transom lights (often using small prismatic glass panes) above display windows. In some cases the transoms were operable to increase interior air circulation. Electric incandescent lights enabled storeowners to call attention to their

¹ Definitions for Related Property Types was derived, in large part, from H. Ward Jandl's *Preservation Brief 11: Rehabilitating Historic Storefronts* (NPS Technical Preservation Services, Preservation Assistance Division; National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior: 1982), pp. 2 - 3.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham, Washington, 1882 - 1915

Whatcom County, Washington

Section E Page 3

E. Statement of Historic Contexts (cont.)

entrance and display windows and permitted shopping after dark. In buildings with a main façade over 25 feet wide, stairways were often centrally located between commercial bays, providing access to the upper story floors from the street level. Masonry piers placed at each end of the storefront were often used to frame the street level commercial space.

Background

The period of significance (1882 - 1915) encompasses two historic contexts representing major events that subsequently effected Bellingham's commercial development and civic investment.

The first historic context (1882 - 1900) represents the period within which the four towns that would become the city of Bellingham (Whatcom, Sehome, Bellingham, and Fairhaven) gained their footing. This was largely accomplished through capital investment made as a result of actual and speculated development of local and regional rail systems. The second context (1900 - 1915) encompasses the period within which the towns consolidated as a city and experienced significant commercial growth through increased investment in the CBD.

The early settlement period (1852 - 1882), beginning with the settlement of Whatcom and ending with the advent of railroad speculation, falls outside of the period of significance but is reviewed here for contextual purposes.

Early Settlement, 1852 - 1882

The city of Bellingham is located in Whatcom County on Bellingham Bay in northern Puget Sound, 18 miles from the Canadian border. (See *Location Maps, Figures 1 and 2.*) Surrounded by mountains to the south and east, the landscape becomes increasingly agrarian toward the north upon entering the Nooksack River Basin. Across the bay, Lummi and the San Juan Islands rise abruptly from the protected waters of the sound, and toward the east the snow-capped peaks of Mount Baker, the Twin Sisters and other prominent points of the Cascade Range are visible. The first inhabitants of the area were the Lummi, Semiahmoo and Nooksack groups. Early exploration in 1792 by British Captain George Vancouver resulted in the name of Bellingham Bay, which Vancouver named after Sir William Bellingham, controller of storekeeper's accounts for the British Navy.²

Four creeks intersect the Bellingham area: Chuckanut and Padden to the south; Squalicum to the north; and Whatcom, which is central to the city's history, located at the northern end of Bellingham's current CBD.

² "Bellingham." Pamphlet, (Whatcom Museum of History and Art, Bellingham, WA), n.d.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham, Washington, 1882 - 1915

Whatcom County, Washington

Section E Page 4

E. Statement of Historic Contexts (cont.)

Whatcom Creek, which derives its name from the Lummi word for waterfall (translated as “noisy all the time”), runs four miles from its beginnings at Lake Whatcom to where it tumbles down a falls just before entering an estuary at the mouth of Bellingham Bay. It was this ideal combination of sheltered bay and falling water that attracted early settlers.

Little effort had been made by Europeans to settle the area until 1852, until failed gold seekers Henry Roeder and Russell Peabody arrived in search of a location to build a lumber mill. Led by Lummi Indians, the men located an adequate site below a bluff at the base of the Whatcom Creek waterfall. By 1853 the two entrepreneurs had filed land claims that straddled the mouth of the creek. The plats filed for these two parcels would fix the location of property lines and roads that exist today in the CBD.

The Peabody/Roeder settlement centered around the area on the north shore of Whatcom Creek. The first cabin was built in 1853 on land that would in later years be occupied by a sewage treatment plant (presently Maritime Heritage Park). The area on the flat below the bluff was used by the Lummi as an encampment and as a center for trading with the whites. The settlement, which came to be known as Whatcom, became the first county seat by 1855. In addition to the mill the town consisted of nine small buildings and a dock.³ Whatcom was the first of four towns that would become the future city of Bellingham.

Two other towns were being settled in 1853 at the southern end of Bellingham Bay: Bellingham, which was developed around the Pattle Mine, and Fairhaven, a small settlement located at the southern end of the bay. In 1854, a fourth town called Sehome was being settled around the Sehome Mine, located between the towns of Whatcom and Bellingham at the foot of what is currently known as Sehome Hill. (See Figure 3: *Original Towns of Bellingham Bay.*)

Sehome grew slowly around the mining operations. A San Francisco mining syndicate held the rights to the property and subsequently formed the Bellingham Bay Coal Company (BBCC). Edmund C. Fitzhugh was hired as superintendent, and filed a claim in 1854 for what would become the town of Sehome (named after his Clallam Indian father-in-law, “S’-yah-whom”).⁴ Between 1859 and 1860 the BBCC invested \$100,000 to build a new coal wharf, bunkers and tramway.⁵

³ James H. Vandermeer, *The History of Existing Structures within the area of the Whatcom Creek Redevelopment Project, Bellingham, Washington*. (Master's Thesis, December 1973), pp. 105-106.

⁴ Sehome History Group. *At Home on the Hill: An Historical Album of an Early 20th Century Neighborhood on Sehome Hill*. (Self-published by the Sehome History Group, Bellingham, WA, 2000), p. 7/b.

⁵ Tetra Tech, Inc. *Bellingham Abandoned Mine Land Survey Final Report*. Englewood, Colorado, for the U.S. Department of the Interior Office of Surface Mining (Denver, Colorado: December 1984), p. 9.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham, Washington, 1882 - 1915

Whatcom County, Washington

Section E Page 5

E. Statement of Historic Contexts (cont.)

In addition to logging and timber industries, fishing and farming were other early pursuits in the Bellingham Bay area. Aided by miles of shoreline that provided access to distant markets, these were joined by mining, quarrying, and associated industries. First coal, then gold and other metallic minerals, and finally sand, gravel and stone, were produced in quantities large enough to attract the attention of investors across the state and beyond.⁶

Fueled by the success of these early industries, over the next 30 years the towns of Whatcom, Sehome, Bellingham and Fairhaven underwent periods of boom and bust. Discovery of gold along the Fraser River in 1858 started an intense, although brief boom as thousands of prospectors came to the Bellingham Bay area after word spread that a shorter trail to the gold fields could be accessed from the settlements on the bay. Exemplary of the fervor that grasped the area, three San Francisco investors constructed a brick warehouse on the Whatcom Creek tide flats near the Roeder-Peabody sawmill to capitalize on the influx of miners. The boom was short-lived, however, and the Bellingham Bay towns were cut out of the loop when the governor of British Columbia required all miners to obtain permits in Victoria.

Another period of boom and bust occurred during the 1870s, when major railroads were being laid from east to west across the United States. A number of Puget Sound towns, including Whatcom, Sehome, Bellingham, and Fairhaven, competed to become the western terminus. The anticipated boom collapsed almost before it got under way, when the 1873 depression, which affected not only the region but the whole country, devastated investment activity. Whatcom's economy was dealt a further blow in 1873 when the Roeder Mill burned to the ground, and several years later Sehome's economy suffered when the Sehome Mine closed operations in January, 1878.

The four towns struggled over the next few years. Subsistence farming and fishing kept the area alive until the latter part of 1882, when logging and a newly developed fishing industry began to re-populate the Bellingham Bay waterfront. From that point on new developments were planned, and economic and social progress was once more anticipated, and renewed discussion of railroad development would spur substantial development in the four bay towns over the next few decades.⁷

Early Settlement Commercial Architecture, 1852 - 1882

Buildings constructed during the early settlement period were predominantly log and wood frame -- the use of brick or masonry was an anomaly. Commercial development in the two northern towns of Whatcom and

⁶ James W. Scott and Daniel E. Turbeville, III. *Early Industries of Bellingham Bay and Whatcom County: A Photographic Essay*. (Fourth Corner Registry: Bellingham, WA: 1980), p. 61.

⁷ James W. Scott and Daniel E. Turbeville, III. *Whatcom County in Maps: 1832 - 1937*. (Center for Pacific Northwest Studies & The Fourth Corner Registry: Bellingham, Washington: 1983), p. 28.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham, Washington, 1882 - 1915

Whatcom County, Washington

Section E Page 6

E. Statement of Historic Contexts (cont.)

Sehome centered around the Whatcom Creek tidal flat estuary and the area surrounding the Sehome Mine operations. One and two-story commercial buildings were the norm, and many buildings in Whatcom were constructed on pilings, directly on the tide flats, and were accessed by a system of raised boardwalks and wharfs.

Historic Context:

Railroad Speculation and its Effect on the Early Towns of Bellingham, 1882 - 1900

It was between 1882 and 1900 that the four bay towns gained their foothold, primarily provided by the anticipated connection with outside markets through railroads. From 1882 through 1891, the promise of railroads encouraged investment and speculation throughout Whatcom County, and marked the beginning of a concerted effort to exploit the region's considerable natural resources. Major attempts were made during this period to develop regional railroads, and an effort was made to make one of the bay settlements the terminus of a transcontinental railroad. In addition, street railways and an interurban railroad were developed and/or planned, and a number of co-occurring services were initiated, including water, gas and electricity.

The middle years of the decade -- from 1884 through early 1888 -- did not produce especially rewarding activity for the four small towns. During the early 1880s Whatcom's business district consisted of about twenty buildings of various sizes, mainly located on the tide flat on the northerly side of Whatcom Creek, below the falls.⁸ The town grew slowly, and by the end of 1883 had become incorporated. In 1885 Whatcom's business district, which was centered on 14th Street (currently Astor Street) and C Streets, burned and was re-established on 13th Street (currently known as Holly Street).⁹

Sehome was also still a fledgling settlement during the early 1880s, and until late in that decade was primarily composed of the company town that had grown around the mining operations. Photographs from this period show Elk Street (currently known as State Street), Sehome's main thoroughfare, as little more than a dirt road bordered by tree stumps and surrounded by forest. Similarly, farther south down the shore, the towns of Bellingham and Fairhaven had not yet begun to thrive.

It was between 1888 and 1891 that the four towns and adjacent areas of Whatcom County began to grow, when they became the focus of business interests across the greater Northwest. A number of local railroad lines were launched during this period, including the Bellingham Bay and British Columbia (BB&BC), the Bellingham Bay and Eastern (BB&E) and the Fairhaven and Southern. In less than a decade these had

⁸ Vandermeer, p. 106.

⁹ Ibid, p. 107.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham, Washington, 1882 - 1915

Whatcom County, Washington

Section E Page 7

E. Statement of Historic Contexts (cont.)

been acquired as part of three of the transcontinental lines that would serve the Pacific Northwest for more than three-quarters of a century -- the Milwaukee, the Northern Pacific and the Great Northern. From this point on Bellingham Bay and Whatcom County could transport products to all parts of the continental United States and Canada, and beyond, wherever markets could be found.¹⁰

Population surged in the county and the four bays towns between 1888 and the early 1890s as a result of the incoming railroad. According to Polk's 1887 *Puget Sound Directory*, in 1885 Whatcom County's population was a mere 3,095. The town of Whatcom consisted of about 800 people and was the only incorporated town, and Sehome was a village with a population of approximately 150. Bellingham had a dozen or so houses, and Fairhaven was still a promoter's dream in the mind of local entrepreneur "Dirty Dan" Harris.¹¹

In contrast, the 1890 census recorded a county population of 18,591 -- six times what it had been five years before. E.M. Day's 1890 *Fairhaven City Directory* recorded that Fairhaven boasted nine "immense" sawmills, one shingle mill, "miles" of newly constructed wharves, four banks, 100 new buildings, and eight hotels, including the "grandest of all the hotels in the great Northwest," the Fairhaven, built at cost of \$150,000.

Similar development was occurring up the shore in Whatcom and Sehome. Polk's 1890 *City Directory* claimed that Whatcom, with its large stretch of waterfront, had "good hotels, restaurants, and business houses," and had spent \$200,000 on street improvements during that year. These improvements included grading and planking all the streets, giving the city "a metropolitan appearance." During the same year, in Sehome a water works was under construction and "new streets were being cut through in all directions, graded, and substantially planked."

The phenomenal growth of the towns can be accounted to the boost lent by the major investments of financiers such as James F. Wardner, C.X. Larrabee, P.B. Cornwall and Nelson Bennett. In 1888, Bennett purchased Fairhaven and investors began buying docks, mills, mines and timberlands. In May of 1890 Fairhaven annexed "Old" Bellingham and the two became known as Fairhaven. Investors developed waterworks, electric companies, streetcar lines and gas plants. Led by Bennett, Fairhaven interests built a railroad out into Skagit County, while Sehome and Whatcom backers built another railroad north to British Columbia.¹²

¹⁰ Scott and Turbeville, III. *Early Industries of Bellingham Bay and Whatcom County*, p. 7.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² "Bellingham," n.p.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham, Washington, 1882 - 1915

Whatcom County, Washington

Section E Page 8

E. Statement of Historic Contexts (cont.)

Meanwhile, P.B. Cornwall was working to advance his interests in the town of Sehome. In 1888, under Cornwall's leadership, the Bellingham Bay Coal Company reincorporated as the Bellingham Bay Improvement Company (BBIC) in order to capitalize on the extensive Sehome Mine holdings. Cornwall's wealth and strategically-located federal land grants aided the development of his railroad, which ran right through Sehome and provided powerful influence over the town's development.

In 1890 the BBIC initiated a number of improvements to Sehome, which had reincorporated under the new name of "New Whatcom" in May of that year. Sehome Hill was logged, a town site was cleared, and a large portion of Holly Street was planked. Magnolia, Chestnut, Maple, Laurel, and Rose were among the streets cleared and graded during that year. Holly Street in Sehome had been joined in 1889 by a viaduct with 13th Street in Whatcom, "practically uniting" the two towns. Facilitated by the towns' shared water, power and sewer systems, in February 1891 Whatcom consolidated with New Whatcom (Sehome) under the name of New Whatcom. By the early 1890s Sehome was emerging as the dominant commercial center on the bay.

Sehome had several physical advantages over the other towns on the bay, one being the deep water access provided *via* the Sehome Dock, which was located at the south end of Dock Street (currently known as Cornwall Avenue). Water transportation at that time was more extensively used than ground, thus the Sehome Dock held primary importance as it provided the town with extensive and wide connections. Several steamship companies offered regular runs from the dock to Victoria, Seattle, the San Juan's, as well as to points farther, such as San Francisco.

Whatcom also had the benefit of deep water access, but due to the extensive tide flats the town had been obliged to build a dock -- the Colony Wharf -- parallel to the outflow of Whatcom Creek. The wharf stretched a mile out into the bay to reach deep water, and was not as convenient or centrally-located as the Sehome Dock.

Sehome also had the benefit of proximity to major rail transportation corridors. The train station was located one block west of Elk on Railroad Avenue, roughly a block away from the Sehome Dock. As a result of the strategic location of the town, Sehome became the transportation hub for the area. As the town developed, commercial activity centered along Elk Street and spread to the north and west. Gradually Whatcom's commercial center moved southeast along Holly Street to join Sehome's center. Commercial activity centered around Holly and Elk Street, with Elk Street becoming the financial center of the town of

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham, Washington, 1882 - 1915

Whatcom County, Washington

Section E Page 9

E. Statement of Historic Contexts (cont.)

New Whatcom. The downtown area was fed locally by an extensive streetcar system, which allowed for a dense and well-developed urban area.

By the early 1890s settlement and commerce had polarized around the two towns of New Whatcom and Fairhaven. The railroad had significantly aided in their development by adding an overland connection to the already established shipping and water travel lanes of the port cities. New Whatcom was emerging as the dominant financial and commercial center over that of Fairhaven, and the 1892 construction of the New Whatcom City Hall on Prospect Street near Whatcom Creek cemented the town's position on the bay.

The achievements of the newly-consolidated City of New Whatcom were extolled in this excerpt from Polk's 1892 *Gazetteer of Oregon, Washington and Idaho*:

*"The city is admirably situated on Bellingham Bay. ... Here is one of the finest harbors on the Sound, capable of accommodating ships of the largest tonnage. These facts coupled with the railroad facilities, developed and in prospect, will make this city a formidable rival of the great cities farther up the Sound. ...The city has street electric railway connecting with Fairhaven, gas works, an admirable volunteer fire department, six prosperous banks, and two daily newspapers: the Reveille (Rep) and Exponent (Dem)..."*¹³

This growth continued until the region suffered the nationwide depression known as the "Panic of 1893." Local industries closed their doors, banks failed and many local workers were driven back to subsistence farming to survive. By the late 1890s, however, the area had recovered and Northwest Washington began an unprecedented period of economic growth.¹⁴ By the close of the 19th century, the lumber industry had spread to many parts of the county, as sawmills, shingle mills and other establishments proliferated. Joining the lumber industry were coal mines, gold mines, quarries for stone and sand, brickyards, flour mills, blacksmith shops and livery stables, dairies, creameries, nurseries and oast houses for hops, fish packing plants and canneries.¹⁵ With the four cornerstones of the economy in place, the future looked promising for the county and the towns of New Whatcom and Fairhaven.

CBD Commercial Architecture, 1882 - 1900

Commercial architecture constructed between 1882 and the early 1890s in the Whatcom/Sehome CBD area can be characterized by a predominance of one- and two-story frame buildings. In Whatcom, many of the commercial frame buildings were built on pilings directly on the tide flats.

¹³ Scott and Turbeville, III. *Early Industries of Bellingham Bay and Whatcom County*, p. 8.

¹⁴ Scott and Turbeville, III. *Whatcom County in Maps: 1832 - 1937*, p. 46.

¹⁵ Scott and Turbeville, III. *Early Industries of Bellingham Bay and Whatcom County*, p. 9.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham, Washington, 1882 - 1915

Whatcom County, Washington

Section E Page 10

E. Statement of Historic Contexts (cont.)

By the early 1890s the consolidation of Whatcom and New Whatcom (Sehome) as "New Whatcom" initiated commercial development of a more substantial nature. As a result of the railroad speculation and subsequent investment made in commercial structures, multi-story masonry buildings were increasingly being constructed during this time, many of native Chuckanut sandstone and/or brick made in local brickyards. These masonry structures, designed in the Queen Anne and Richardsonian Romanesque styles that were popular during the Victorian era, reflected greater capital investment and confidence in the town's economic viability.

American trends in commercial architecture between the 1870s and 1880s (but continuing as late as the 1900s in some areas) were showing an increase in ornamentation and the use of a variety of materials. Often a much larger portion of building façades were covered with decorative patterns formed in wood, stone, brick, cast iron, and, by the 1880s, stamped iron. Windows and entrances on facades were often several shapes and sizes, and at times turrets, towers, oriel windows, gables and attic stories with high-pitched roofs were used to generate picturesque effects. At the same time, less expensive commercial buildings remained relatively simple in decoration, with only a few surface details or large, ornate elements.¹⁶

Currently, several frame buildings dating to the mid-1880s remain in the area of the original town of Whatcom (now referred to as "Old Town"), though these are in poor condition and retain questionable integrity. The earliest of these is the 1886 Union Block at 610-618 W. Holly Street, constructed to replace a structure destroyed in the 1885 fire at 14th and C Streets. Originally a two-story building, the street level of the Union Block was divided into six separate tenant spaces that housed a bank, cigar store, jewelry, barber, saloon, and offices. The building has minimal historic integrity -- it has lost its upper story and its wood siding has been covered in stucco. The 1890 Stenger Hotel at 604-606 W. Holly Street is another early building that has been altered over time. This building also lost its upper story, and its original wood plank siding has been obscured on the front and south faces by a 1960s façade.

More substantial buildings representative of the prosperity of the early 1890s also remain today in Old Town. The 1891 multi-story Lottie Roth Block constructed in brick and Chuckanut sandstone in the Richardsonian Romanesque style remains at the edge of what was Whatcom's thriving downtown district at 1100-1106 W. Holly Street (just outside the MPD boundary). Originally housing a bank at street level, the Roth Block also housed retail shops, a hotel, and apartments. The building was listed on the National Register in 1978.

¹⁶ Richard Longstreth. *The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture*. (National Trust for Historic Preservation, The Preservation Press: 1987), p. 31.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham, Washington, 1882 - 1915

Whatcom County, Washington

Section E Page 11

E. Statement of Historic Contexts (cont.)

In *Sehome*, similar construction occurred during the early 1890s prior to the Panic of 1893. One example is the brick 1890 Oakland Block at 310-318 W. Holly Street, located near where the "iron bolt" was placed. (An iron bolt was imbedded in stone south of Whatcom Creek at the intersection of Champion and Holly Streets to mark the point at which the towns of Whatcom and Sehome met.) The first floors of this building housed offices and shops, and the third floor was used as the Oakland Hotel. The Oakland Block briefly housed New Whatcom's city hall prior to the 1892 construction of the "new" city hall on the bluff. The Oakland Block was placed on the National Register in 1999.

One of the best examples of late 19th century masonry commercial architecture remaining in the former Sehome area exists on the corner of North State (formerly Elk) and Rose Streets. The two-story B.B. Jones Block at 932-936 N. State Street, built in 1891, was the first brick building to appear in an area where frame construction predominated. Designed in the Queen Anne commercial style, it is the last of its kind in Bellingham, and retains relatively high integrity. A second story octagonal turret (originally topped by an onion-shaped dome and a ten-foot flag pole) still remains. The bay windows also remain, and were a common feature of the style, which was especially popular for corner locations. The building retains good integrity on its upper level and is eligible for the National Register under the registration requirements set by this MPD.

Historic Context:

Consolidation and Commercial Growth of Bellingham's CBD, 1900 - 1915

By 1900 the nation-wide depression had ended, East Coast capital was once more invested in local industries, and resources from the region were in demand throughout the United States.¹⁷ As a result, during the first decade of the 20th century the bay towns of New Whatcom and Fairhaven experienced a period of unprecedented growth.

The county population in 1900 was recorded at 25,000, according to Polk's *City Directory*. Fairhaven had the world's largest shingle mill, the Puget Sound Saw Mill and Shingle Company, and the world's largest salmon cannery, the Pacific American Fisheries. New Whatcom was home to the Bellingham Bay Improvement Company's expansive sawmill operations. Industries in the Whatcom County area were also prospering – in 1900 there were 55 shingle mills, 17 saw mills, 10 salmon canneries, three fertilizer and fish oil factories and the only sheet metal or can factory in Washington. Fairhaven and New Whatcom were connected by miles of trolley system, and the State Normal School on Sehome Hill was experiencing the largest enrollment of any normal school in Washington.

¹⁷ "Bellingham," n.p.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham, Washington, 1882 - 1915

Whatcom County, Washington

Section E Page 12

E. Statement of Historic Contexts (cont.)

Duplication of basic services and competition over limited capital finally moved citizens of New Whatcom and Fairhaven to vote for consolidation in 1903. To satisfy both parties of the new "City of the First Class" -- the fourth largest city in the state at the time -- the neutral name of "Bellingham," after the bay, was chosen. By 1904 Bellingham's new charter was adopted and its population had reached 22,632, providing for substantially increased investment in the CBD.¹⁸

The city of Bellingham continued to experience rapid growth over the next few years. According to the *1906 Bellingham City Directory*, the 1890 census had recorded the population of the four bay towns at 8,135; by 1900 population had grown to 11,062 (a 36% increase from 1890); in 1904 growth had surged to 22,632 (a 104% increase within four years); and by 1906 the population was 31,000, a 37% increase since 1904 and a total increase of 180% since 1900.¹⁹

During the first part of the 20th century the commercial activity in the city's CBD revolved around the waterfront, based in the original town of Sehome in the Dock Street (currently known as Cornwall Avenue) area, and the railroad-related passenger and freight movement along Railroad Avenue. Industrial and commercial development along the waterfront had been hastened by the completion of the Bellingham Bay & British Columbia (BB&BC) in 1891, and railroad expansion had continued since this time, with lines completed through town and connecting to outlying areas. The Fairhaven and Southern, later absorbed into the Great Northern, ran its track on a long trestle across the tide flats between Squalicum Creek and the Sehome Wharf. In 1902 the Great Northern built its present line on trestle, paralleling the earlier one along Roeder Avenue, across Whatcom Creek, and along the shore to Fairhaven. The Bellingham Bay & Eastern (BB&E) was purchased by Northern Pacific in 1902, thereby completing the line through town. The third line, the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul, picked up the BB&BC, and joined the other two to create a major rail corridor along the shoreline from the southernmost end of the city, running all the way to the northern end and beyond.²⁰

The consolidation of the Bellingham streetcar lines during the early 1890s had also contributed to the commercial growth of the area, and acquisition of the Fairhaven and New Whatcom Railway in 1902 by a Boston-based firm greatly facilitated their expansion. The newly renamed Whatcom County Railway &

¹⁸ *At Home on the Hill*, p. 9.

¹⁹ Edith Beebe Carhart. *A History of Bellingham, Washington*. Compiled from Newspaper Articles City Directories and Books of local History by The Bellingham Public Libraries. (The Argonaut Press, Bellingham: 1926, 1968), p. 6.

²⁰ Sally B. Woodbridge and Roger Montgomery. *A Guide to Architecture in Washington State: An Environmental Perspective*. (University of Washington Press, Seattle, WA: 1980), p. 322.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham, Washington, 1882 - 1915

Whatcom County, Washington

Section E Page 13

E. Statement of Historic Contexts (cont.)

Light Company (WCR&L) -- the direct ancestor of today's Puget Power Company -- would expand Bellingham's street railway system to its maximum length of almost 14 miles by 1913.²¹

The construction of infrastructure, services, and transportation system facilitated the growth of businesses in the CBD area. In 1906 the WCR&L invested in major expansions to its existing lines and constructed new ones all over town. The Main Line, which had connected Fairhaven with New Whatcom between Harris and Eldridge Avenues, passed along Elk Street. For sheer accessibility, proximity to a streetcar line created a prime business location and commercial development followed.²² Major investment was made along the streetcar arterials of Holly Street, Elk Street, and Cornwall Avenue. Other streets within the heart of Bellingham's commercial center also profited and grew through their proximity to these public transportation lines.

By 1906 Whatcom County had 162 miles of rail and a good road system within its borders. Major investment was being made in the CBD as theaters, hotels, restaurants, specialty shops, and the like were constructed -- many in the height of style and sparing no expense.²³ According to the *Whatcom County Souvenir circa 1906*, Bellingham was home to people of culture and refinement and had in its midst "thirty-eight churches, two public libraries, 52 secret society lodges, two men's social clubs owning the finest specially constructed club houses in the state, two public hospitals, fair grounds, race track and baseball park, a \$30,000 Y.M.C.A. building, a yacht club and club house, a \$50,000 city hall, a \$200,000 sewer system, a well-equipped fire department, a \$300,000 city water system, and numerous associations, splendid public and office buildings and residences."²⁴

Downtown businesses listed in the 1906 *Whatcom Souvenir* spanned a broad range of specialized services reflecting the affluent life styles and related accoutrements available to Bellingham citizens and visitors. Those commercial enterprises listed included banks, brokerage firms, real estate brokers, investment counselors, insurance companies and other professionals such as dentists, doctors and lawyers; recreation related enterprises such as theaters, cafes, bars, liquor stores, saloons, restaurants, and hotels; meat and produce businesses, groceries, city markets, bakeries, candy companies, and catering businesses; men's and women's clothing stores, tailors, jewelry stores, shoemakers, emporiums and department stores; furniture, home furnishings, paint and wall paper companies; plumbing, hardware, and implement supply companies; artist's studios, laundries and pharmacies; as well as transportation-related businesses such as harness

²¹ Scott and Turbeville, III. *Whatcom County in Maps: 1832 - 1937*, p. 46.

²² Jewell, Jeffrey. "Early Trolley Service Right on Track" (*The Bellingham Business Journal*, Dec. 1998), pp. 64-65.

²³ *Whatcom County Souvenir: the Land of Opportunity, Bellingham, Washington*. (Bellingham, WA: Parker Printing Company, c. 1906), p. 10.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham, Washington, 1882 - 1915

Whatcom County, Washington

Section E Page 14

E. Statement of Historic Contexts (cont.)

companies, livery and feed stables, hay and feed stores, blacksmiths and horseshoeing, and auto garages.²⁵ Many of the buildings housing these businesses were multi-storied, with upper floors rented as professional offices; as high-end or single room occupancy hotels or rooming houses; and as meeting and/or dance halls. Although some businesses were still housed in early frame buildings, many existed in increasingly specialized, distinctive buildings of style and substance.

By 1909 rail activity had become so congested in the CBD that Magnolia Street was double-tracked between Dock and Elk Streets to reroute some of the streetcar traffic off Holly Street. During this same year the WCR&L made another major investment and constructed over 50 blocks of new trolley lines to reach the city's outlying areas. This investment provided access to the central business core from the new "streetcar suburbs" that were growing along the lines. During that same year, tracks were laid south down the long pier to Sehome Wharf and the enormous Bellingham Bay Lumber Company mill. Though it was the shortest streetcar route, the "Dock Line" was a vital link between the waterfront and downtown, as it allowed trolleys to meet the "mosquito fleet" of Puget Sound passenger steamers, and to deliver mill employees to and from work.²⁶

Bellingham's importance as a major railroad center for northwestern Washington prompted many wholesale firms to locate there early in the 20th century, and because of its direct proximity to the rail, Railroad Avenue became an ideal location for retail and wholesale businesses. For example, in 1909 the Northern Grocery Company, one of the largest of its kind in the area, constructed a two-story reinforced concrete building to serve as the company headquarters on Railroad Avenue near the corner of Chestnut Street. This was a prime location, as the BB&BC tracks ran past the front of the building and the Northern Pacific spur ran behind the building down the alley.²⁷

The considerable growth that occurred between 1900 and 1915 in Bellingham's CBD is evidenced by the substantial commercial and public buildings that remain today. By the time World War I began in 1914 several physical elements, including a major railroad terminal, federal building, and streetcar system, established Bellingham's downtown as an urban center. Prior to August 1914, the local economy had been rapidly expanding in anticipation of the opening of the long-awaited Panama Canal, which would drastically decrease shipping time to markets on the East and Gulf Coasts. This expansion would continue until around 1915, when the first signs of World War I became evident in Whatcom County with the overnight disappearance of investment capital and the subsequent collapse of many projected railroad,

²⁵ *Whatcom County Souvenir*, pp. 10 - 15.

²⁶ Jeffrey Jewell. "Early Trolley Service Right on Track." pp. 64-65.

²⁷ Turbeville, Daniel E. III. *An Illustrated Inventory of Historic Bellingham Buildings, 1852 - 1915*. (Bellingham Municipal Arts Commission; Bellingham, Washington: November 1977), p. 222.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham, Washington, 1882 - 1915

Whatcom County, Washington

Section E Page 15

E. Statement of Historic Contexts (cont.)

shipping, industrial and building schemes. It was not until the United States finally entered the war in April, 1917 that the sudden increase in demand for Northwest raw materials, together with a number of major government construction contracts, led to a recovery in Whatcom County's economy.²⁸

CBD Commercial Architecture, 1900 - 1915

As transportation systems connected the new city with outlying and national commerce, Bellingham's development grew in the familiar pattern of many late-19th and early 20th century American cities, where commerce, social interaction, government, and capital investment gravitated to a central downtown. Fortified by the forces of the railroad and streetcar, during the first years of the 20th century Bellingham's economy was strong, and its main streets had become a densely packed intermingling of buildings, buggies, trolleys and people.

The character of Bellingham's main streets evolved and solidified during this period. The CBD landscape, which had originally consisted of a mass of sandstone hills (some over one and one-half stories high), was being leveled at an increasing rate to make way for new construction. Existing one and two-story frame buildings were being demolished and replaced by substantial, multi-storied high-style buildings designed to house increasingly specific commercial enterprises.

By the end of the 19th century, a transformation in commercial architecture was occurring in the United States. Design was moving away from the ornate, agitated Victorian styles as a result of the influence of the French academic practice fostered by the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris and the newly created American architecture schools. The tendency to simplify architectural ornamentation emerged during the 1880s and early 1890s, and became the prevailing practice from the turn of the century until the late 1920s.²⁹

While Victorian buildings were characterized by additive compositions, the new academic work tended to emphasize unity, order, and balance. These qualities reflected both the basis for principles of design, which applied to individual buildings, as well as to groups of buildings. Based on this premise, it was thought that commercial buildings should contribute to a coherent urban landscape, and that while each facade might possess its own identity and perhaps stand out as a landmark, most building design should be restrained and relatively unobtrusive. These changes did not occur all at once, and a number of buildings built between the late 1880s and the early 1900s were transitional and possessed some of the qualities of High Victorian

²⁸ Scott and Turbeville, III. *Whatcom County in Maps: 1832 - 1937*, p. 61.

²⁹ Longstreth, p. 35.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham, Washington, 1882 - 1915

Whatcom County, Washington

Section E Page 16

E. Statement of Historic Contexts (cont.)

era design. Generally, however, ornament became more restrained, and elements more closely related to one another.³⁰

A preponderance of buildings dating to Bellingham's 1900-1915 boom period remain in the CBD today. Multi-storied commercial buildings were increasingly being constructed in sandstone, brick, and reinforced concrete. A few single-story masonry buildings were built, although most were multi-storied, constructed to take advantage of the rising cost of land in the CBD.

The area where the two original towns of Whatcom and Sehome met was experiencing increased development during this time. To the east of the iron bolt marker, Holly Street intersected the core of Sehome's commercial activity, crossing Champion, Bay, and Prospect Streets, up to Canoe (currently known as Commercial Avenue), Dock (currently Cornwall Avenue), Railroad Avenue and Elk (currently State) Streets, all of which were being developed with single and multi-storied masonry buildings constructed in period fashion. A few of the many buildings in this area that retain high integrity include the two-story brick Holly-Bay-Prospect Building, built in 1912 at 1302-1304 Bay Street/2-8 Prospect Street; the two-story brick Red Front Building, built in 1900 at 200 W. Holly Street; the two-story brick Clover Block, built in 1902 at 201 W. Holly Street; the single-story brick "Leader" Building, constructed in 1901 at 204 W. Holly Street; and the two-story Spokane Block, built in 1903 at 1322 - 1334 Railroad Avenue.

On Elk Street at the eastern edge of the CBD, businesses were expanding and frame structures were being replaced with high-style masonry buildings that housed commercial services such as groceries, liveries, professional offices, and general merchandisers. Typically, buildings along Elk Street were multi-storied, and offered residential rooms, dance and meeting halls, and professional offices on their upper floors. Multi-storied examples that retain good integrity include (but are not limited to) the Morse Hardware Building, built in 1902 at 1025 N. State Street; the three-story Laube Hotel, built in 1903 at 1226 N. State Street; the three-story Windsor Hotel, built in 1904 at 1222 N. State Street; the two-story Daylight Building, built in 1904 at 1201 - 1213 N. State Street; and the three-story Dahlquist Building, built in 1908 at 1201 - 1213 N. State Street (one of Bellingham's first reinforced concrete structures). Other extant examples on State Street that retain high integrity include the two-story brick Maple Block built in 1903 at 1051-1055 N. State Street, the two-story brick Pacific Block built in 1908 at 1059 N. State Street, and the three-story Exchange Building (currently the YMCA) built in 1906 - 07 at 1256 N. State Street.

Development in the area west of the iron bolt -- the original business district of Whatcom -- had been somewhat thwarted due to land claim disputes. By the 1900s Whatcom had acquired the sobriquet of "Old

³⁰ Longstreth, p. 35.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham, Washington, 1882 - 1915

Whatcom County, Washington

Section E Page 17

E. Statement of Historic Contexts (cont.)

Town,” and over the next two decades would continue to support commercial development of a nature different than that of the Sehome district. Examination of the Polk *City Directories* for the first decade of the century suggests that this area was relatively prosperous and economically viable. For example, in 1907, along W. Holly Street near the creek existed roughly 20% of the restaurants in the Bellingham area, 20% of the saloons, 25% of the clothing stores, 30% of the barbers, and 30% of the cigar stores. However, the area had practically no professional offices for lawyers, insurance agents, physicians, or notaries.³¹ Several buildings built between 1900 and 1915 in this area remain and hold varying degrees of integrity. The two-story brick U.S. Hotel built c. 1911 at 700 W. Holly Street is a good masonry example. Other examples with varying degrees of integrity include the two-story frame building (formerly Wilson College) at 401 Holly Street built in 1905 and the one-story frame “Waterfront Tavern” built on piers in 1904 at 521 Holly Street. Although this building’s original façade has been somewhat compromised by the addition of modern materials, its commercial street level configuration remains legible, as does the parapet articulation and small-scale features. Constructed on piers directly in the Whatcom Creek watershed, the Waterfront Tavern is Bellingham’s last surviving historic structure that displays evidence of this type of construction.

Conclusion

Whatcom County’s economy was invigorated when the United States entered the war in April 1917. An increase in demand for Northwest raw materials, together with a number of major government construction contracts, led to a recovery in the county’s development.³² By the end of World War I the economic slump had passed, and by the late 1920’s Bellingham’s CBD saw its third period of physical and material development, fueled by the rising tourism industry and the popularization of the automobile.

This boom would last until October, 1929 when the nation’s stock market crashed. The “Great Depression” arrived late in Bellingham and stayed later than in other parts of the country, and while 1930 was a year of world-wide business decline, its effects had largely not yet been felt in the northern Puget Sound regions. However, by 1932 the effects of the Depression were being felt by Bellingham businesses.³³ It wasn’t until 1941 when the U.S. became involved in World War II that the CBD began to recover. During this period, empty downtown commercial buildings were adaptively reused to serve national defense purposes.

By the mid-1950s a profound shift was occurring in the design of American commercial architecture as a result of the nation’s love affair with the automobile, which created a decisive impact on the landscape.

³¹ Vandermeer, p. 109.

³² *Whatcom County in Maps*, p. 61

³³ *Diehl Ford Running Well at 70:1908 - 1978.*, n.d., n.p.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham, Washington, 1882 - 1915

Whatcom County, Washington

Section E Page 18

E. Statement of Historic Contexts (cont.)

These changes affected the physical organization of commercial development, the architectural aspects emphasized, and often, the forms of buildings. Changes in thought involved the rejection of the conventional layout of cities, premised on the idea that existing patterns of urban development, which had been used in various ways for well over a century, were wrong or outmoded. Dense construction oriented to the street and packed onto comparatively small blocks was now considered a relic of the past. A general pattern of buildings that were freestanding or grouped in clusters and surrounded by generous amounts of open space (often used for parking) became commonplace not only for outlying areas of cities and towns, but also as an ideal for remaking the existing urban commercial core.³⁴

While Bellingham's downtown escaped the wholesale leveling that visited other cities in the form of "urban renewal," many early buildings in Bellingham's urban core were demolished during the 1960s and 1970s. Most notably in the CBD was the loss of the grand corner block buildings, whose sites were well-suited for the new auto-oriented drive-through banks.

As elsewhere, Bellingham citizens reacted to the 1976 bicentennial by showing renewed interest in the city's heritage and an appreciation of its historic civic center. Preservation forces reclaimed a number of threatened landmarks, notably the old City Hall on Prospect Street and the early business district of Fairhaven. Revitalization planning for the Old Town/Whatcom Creek area began during this decade, and after the Bellis Fair Mall was built on the city's outskirts in 1987 and all of downtown Bellingham's major retail stores relocated there, revitalization plans for the city's CBD were initiated.

Interest in the revitalization of Bellingham's CBD has continued up to the present. Many buildings have had their original character obscured behind facades added in past attempts to modernize "antiquated" styles. These modernizations are often reversible, and many buildings that currently lack integrity may become eligible for the National Register of Historic Places if later additions are removed. Some commercial property owners have taken steps to uncover the decorative features of original facades, restoring character to their buildings and the streetscape.

Recently, Bellingham's CBD has drawn increased interest from developers, and several new commercial buildings have been constructed or are planned for construction in the downtown area. Effort has been made by city leaders to guide future commercial and mixed-use construction. There is hope that future development pressures will be met with sensible actions to insure that Bellingham's CBD retains its historic character, and that its commercial buildings continue to be preserved, restored and rehabilitated.

³⁴ Longstreth, p. 126.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham, Washington, 1882 - 1915

Whatcom County, Washington

Section F Page 19

F. Associated Property Types

I. Name of Property Type: Commercial Building. The Commercial Building property type is further divided into two subtypes: Multi- and Single-storied Commercial Buildings.

II. Description

The Commercial Building Type is defined as a building designed with commercial use at the street level, and in the case of multi-storied structures, with additional commercial or other uses on upper-story floors. Historic commercial uses include but are not limited to retail facilities that were designed to serve the general public such as department and furniture stores, restaurants, grocery and hardware stores, emporiums, car dealerships, candy companies, as well as banks, offices, hotel lobbies, and theaters. Upper story residential uses in the form of hotels (including high-end and single room occupancy) and apartments were often incorporated into these buildings, as well as meeting and dance halls, and professional offices for dentists, doctors and lawyers.

Although the Commercial Building Type can be found throughout the city of Bellingham, this documentation is limited to those properties built between 1882 – 1915 within the CBD area. Exclusions in this study include freestanding buildings that tend to be located on the fringe of commercial areas and that differ markedly in design from the Commercial Building Type, such as public and institutional buildings (city hall, schools, fire stations, county or federal office buildings), religious buildings, fraternal halls, and social clubs or organizations (unless they had a commercial use at street level). Additionally, this documentation excludes industrial buildings such as power stations, warehouses, and manufacturing plants.

The Commercial Building Type is divided into two sub-types: Single- and Multi-storied. In Bellingham's CBD, Multi-storied Commercial Buildings are commonly two to four stories, although some have up to seven stories. Many of Bellingham's Multi-storied Commercial Buildings were designed with a mezzanine, a low-ceilinged story built between the two main stories of a commercial building. The incorporation of a mezzanine created valuable space often used as offices or storage. Some Single-storied Commercial Buildings were also built with a mezzanine.

Between the early 19th and mid-20th centuries, most commercial buildings were designed to be seen from the front, and with relatively few exceptions, were not conceived as free-standing objects. From the exterior, it was the façade that gave commercial architecture its distinctive qualities and distinguished one building from the next. Sidewalls were often designed as party walls, shared with or secured to those of the adjacent structure. When facing alleys or service walls, sidewalls stood free; however, they were almost

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham, Washington, 1882 - 1915

Whatcom County, Washington

Section F Page 20

F. Associated Property Types (cont.)

always treated in an elementary, utilitarian manner. Rear walls were similarly rendered. When sidewalls were meant to be seen, they tended to echo the composition of the primary façade.¹

Multi-storied Commercial Buildings were commonly designed with a façade characterized by a horizontal division that separated the building face into two distinct zones. Often referred to as a "two-part commercial block" façade, this is the most common type of composition used for small and moderate-sized commercial buildings throughout the country. The two zones may be similar, while clearly separated from one another; they may be harmonious but different in character; or they may have little visual relationship. The two-part division reflects the different uses inside -- the street level zone indicates public spaces such as retail stores, a banking room, an insurance office or hotel lobby. The upper zone suggests more private uses such as offices, hotel rooms, or a dance or meeting hall. The two-part commercial building façade configuration has been used to accommodate a wide range of functions, and can be found in almost all forms of commercial development, dominating the core of small cities and towns, as well as many neighborhood commercial areas.²

Banks, office buildings, hotels, theaters and fraternal halls were also commonly designed in the "two-part" form during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Banks rank among the most elaborate examples and are further distinguished by having greater consistency in the treatment of all stories. Hotels may have more widely spaced windows in the upper section and shop fronts designed to harmonize with the floors above. Theaters often occupied most, if not all, of the building's volume, or may have been relegated to an upper level. The latter configuration was also common for fraternal halls. Shops, sometimes with offices above, were included as part of theaters to generate additional revenue. In fact, when the depth of a lot permitted, a theater may have been situated at the rear of retail and office space, so that little indication of its presence was given save an embellished entry area and signs.³

In buildings with upper stories designed primarily for human occupation, access to natural light and air was desirable. Traditionally, narrow and deep buildings of the 25 by 100 foot variety did not provide these amenities except close to the small amount of wall area exposed to the outdoors. To provide access to exterior light and ventilation, skylights and interior wells or shafts were often incorporated into the design of a building's upper stories. As a result of these light wells, the upper floors of the building often assumed a shape approximating that of an L, I, E, T, H or a squared U, O or B.⁴

¹ Longstreth, p. 17.

² Ibid, p. 24.

³ Ibid, p. 31.

⁴ Ibid, p. 17 - 18.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham, Washington, 1882 - 1915

Whatcom County, Washington

Section F Page 21

F. Associated Property Types (cont.)

The Single-storied Commercial Building generally has only one story, which was treated in much the same variety of ways as the lower zone of a Multi-storied Commercial Building. Single-storied Commercial Buildings often do not possess zone divisions, and lack a distinguishing set of major elements.⁵ Masonry examples of this type often were designed with an articulated parapet, with relief brickwork incorporated into the façade.

Developed during the mid-19th century, Single-storied Commercial Buildings proliferated in response to the rapid growth of communities and the hopes speculators held for continued expansion -- in this sense, they represented a claim staked on urban ground.

Commonly, Single-storied Commercial Buildings constructed during the early 20th century presented narrow street frontage and had a façade comprised of little more than plate glass windows and an entry surmounted by a cornice or parapet. A sizable wall area often existed between windows and cornice to provide a place for advertising and to make the façade appear larger and more urban than would it otherwise. In some instances this space was filled with a ribbon of fixed glazed lights, which provided the building's interior with additional light.

III. Significance

Eligibility under Criteria A, B and C

Commercial buildings built during the period of significance (1882 – 1915) in downtown Bellingham reflect the economic growth that occurred as a result of new and expanding industries in and around the city. As such they are eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places under *Criterion A*, for their association with the periods of commercial development in Bellingham's history. Lining the streets of most blocks of the CBD, they constitute a thematic property type built to house commercial purposes within the developing Bellingham area. As a property type they are recognizable in their physical characteristics, including façade compositions, proportions, and stylistic influences, which reflect the buildings' original functions and construction periods.

Commercial buildings within the documentation area may also be eligible with an associative significance under *Criterion B*, as a property that best represents the life a person that is significant to the growth and development of the city of Bellingham. Properties listed under *criterion B* should be documented by

⁵ Ibid, p. 21.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham, Washington, 1882 - 1915

Whatcom County, Washington

Section F Page 22

F. Associated Property Types (cont.)

stating the major achievements of the individual and how their career specifically influenced the growth and development of the central business district of Bellingham.

Architecturally, most of the eligible commercial buildings in Bellingham's CBD represent the common commercial building style of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. As such they are also significant under *Criterion C* for architecture. The collection of remaining buildings reflect the prevalent building forms, materials, and styles of the late Victorian era, and the early 20th century Beaux Arts and American School influences. Additionally, some buildings may represent the work of notable architects or builders.

IV. Registration Requirements

To be eligible for listing on the National Register, a commercial building must convey its sense of historic character through structural and associative integrity, must have documented historical significance within the contexts of the commercial development of Bellingham's CBD, and must fall within the physical boundaries set in this document.

Requirements for Multi-storied Commercial Buildings:

1. Should retain sufficient exterior integrity on its upper level(s) to convey a sense of its original design and architectural detailing.
2. Fenestration patterns should be retained on its upper level(s), although in-kind window replacement (including metal windows replicated to appear as original wood sashes) is permissible.
3. Evidence of original entryway and commercial space division on the primary façade should be discernible.
4. Compromised street level façades, window and door openings, and materials are universal throughout the property type and should not be cause for ineligibility.

Requirements for Single-story Commercial Buildings:

1. Evidence of original entryway and commercial space division of primary façade must be discernible.
2. Compromised street level façades, window and door openings, and materials are universal throughout the property type and should not be cause for ineligibility. However, parapet and any upper portion of the façade should retain sufficient exterior integrity to convey a sense of the building's original design and architectural style.

Considerations for Interiors:

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham, Washington, 1882 - 1915

Whatcom County, Washington

Section F Page 23

F. Associated Property Types (cont.)

While not a qualifying requirement for National Register eligibility, the preservation, restoration, and/or rehabilitation of original interior spaces (spatial arrangements, configurations, and materials) is highly recommended.

The arrangement and expressive characteristics of interior spaces provide clues to the purposes for which a building was designed. Even service areas such as corridors are indicative in this respect. Primary space -- a banking hall, department store atrium, hotel lobby or theater auditorium -- not only speak of a building's function, but can also be major contributors to its identity.⁶

Given this consideration, the presence of intact upper story floor plans should result in a more favorable rating of integrity for the building as a whole, increasing the probability of acceptance to the National Register. The following suggestions are made for both Multi- and Single-storied Commercial Buildings:

1. Removal of some original partition walls and addition of some doors connecting guest rooms should not be cause for disqualification. Although the absence of original fixtures, such as gas lights, doors, toilets and tubs, and the like should not disqualify the building from National Register consideration, their presence adds strength to the overall rating of integrity. Similarly, interior window openings such as transoms and hall windows contribute to eligibility.
2. Facilities on ground floors and in basements should not be expected to have retained levels of integrity comparable to that on upper floors. Installation of elevators, kitchens, dining rooms, laundry rooms, and other reconfigurations of space should not be a disqualifying factor. However, the retention of existing character-defining features on these levels should result in a more favorable evaluation of integrity.

⁶ Ibid, p. 18 - 19.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham, Washington, 1882 - 1915

Whatcom County, Washington

Section G, H Page 24

G. Geographical Data

The geographical area of the Multiple Property Documentation (MPD) encompasses the Commercial Business District (CBD) of the city of Bellingham, Washington. Contained within its boundaries are buildings representative of what was historically a flourishing commercial core. The MPD area is based on the existence of remaining resources built during the period of significance, and includes historic commercial buildings of the early towns of Whatcom and Sehome which consolidated in 1891 as New Whatcom. It does not include those blocks with resources that no longer retain integrity, or are primarily non-commercial (public, institutional, or residential buildings).

The MPD area has an irregularly shaped border. Beginning at the southeast end of the MPD area at the corner of Rose and N. State Streets, the boundary travels northeast down State Street, turns to the northwest at East Champion Street and continues north along Unity Street until it turns west along Central Avenue. At this point, the boundary turns and travels south down Prospect to West Champion Street, then turns west to meet Holly Street, and then follows Holly northwest to D Street. (The boundary includes properties on both sides of all streets.) From the corner of Holly Street and Central Avenue, the boundary travels south to Roeder Avenue, where it turns southeast and continues in this direction up to meet Cornwall Avenue. The boundary then travels southwest down Cornwall to East Maple Street, where it turns to the east to terminate at North State Street. (See Figure 4: Multiple Property Documentation Boundary Map, and Figure 5: USGS Map of Bellingham.)

H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

This MPD was based on information gathered from historic property surveys, studies, and master plans compiled over the last three decades (see *Surveys, Studies, and Master Plans in Section I. Major Bibliographical References*). While none was comprehensive, these studies provided general historical information about the existing historic commercial buildings in Bellingham's CBD. Additional research was then conducted by Kathryn Franks, who reviewed published sources, city directories, fire insurance maps, newspaper articles, and other published and unpublished historical records. Interviews with Jeffrey Jewell, Photo Archivist with the Whatcom Museum of History and Art, provided valuable contextual information about the city's historical commercial development.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham, Washington, 1882 - 1915

Whatcom County, Washington

Section H Page 25

H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods (cont.)

After review of primary and secondary sources, a reconnaissance survey was conducted in October 2002 to determine the existence, condition, and integrity of commercial buildings built between 1882 - 1915 in the CBD. The boundaries defining what is commonly referred to as the Bellingham CBD were chosen as parameters for the inventory. Historical records research and visual survey of the downtown area determined the present concentrations of commercial buildings that dated to the period of significance.

Franks has professional architectural history training and completed the survey, making cursory determinations of the eligibility of the properties based on the level of integrity of building exteriors. When available, historic photographs were compared with existing conditions to determine the integrity of specific buildings. The results of this survey revealed a number of intact historic commercial buildings located within a relatively contiguous area in the CBD. From the data collected through research, survey, and analysis, registration requirements were developed for the Multi- and Single-storied Commercial Building Property Types.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham, Washington, 1882 - 1915

Whatcom County, Washington

Section I Page 26

I. Major Bibliographical References

Surveys, Studies, and Master Plans

Beckwith, Tom, AICP. *Railroad Avenue Action Plan*. Beckwith Consulting Group, for the City of Bellingham: November 1994.

Beckwith, Tom, AICP. *Whatcom Creek Waterfront Action Program*. A report commissioned by the City of Bellingham, in coordination with the Whatcom Creek Waterfront Action Program Steering Committee; Beckwith Consulting Group: November 1996.

Chronicles & Design. *Downtown Bellingham Central Business District: Architectural Resource Overview*. February 1985.

Turbeville, Daniel E. III. *An Illustrated Inventory of Historic Bellingham Buildings, 1852 - 1915*. Bellingham Municipal Arts Commission; Bellingham, WA: November 1977.

Winter & Company, Hoshide Williams Architects, Shapiro & Associates, Nakano Associates, LLC. *City Center Master Plan, Bellingham, Washington*. City of Bellingham, August 2002.

Vandermeer, James H. *The History of Existing Structures within the Area of the Whatcom Creek Redevelopment Project: Bellingham, Washington*. Master's Thesis, December 1973.

Other Bibliographical References

"*Bellingham*." Pamphlet, Whatcom Museum of History and Art; Bellingham, WA. N.D.

Blumenson, John J.-G. *Identifying American Architecture: A Pictorial Guide to Styles and Terms, 1600 - 1945*. W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York, NY: 1977, 1981.

Carhart, Edith Beebe. *A History of Bellingham, Washington*. Compiled from Newspaper Articles City Directories and Books of Local History by The Bellingham Public Libraries, The Argonaut Press; Bellingham, WA: 1926, 1968.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham, Washington, 1882 - 1915

Whatcom County, Washington

Section I Page 27

I. Major Bibliographical References (cont.)

Currier, Al. "Looking Back: City Played Big Role in Wartime Production," *The Bellingham Business Journal*, pp. 66 – 67: November 1999.

Diehl Ford Running Well at 70: 1908 – 1978. N.D.

Edson, Lelah Jackson. *The Fourth Corner: Highlights from the Early Northwest*. Whatcom Museum of History and Art, Bellingham, WA; Craftsman Press, Seattle, WA: 1951, 1968, 1978.

Heller, Ramon. *Please the Customer First: The Brown & Cole Story*. Brown & Coles Stores; Ferndale, WA: 1985.

Heller, Ramon. *Sell 'em Low - Send and Get More: A Centennial History of Morse Hardware Company, 1884 - 1984*. 1984.

Holstine, Craig. *Multiple Property Documentation, Single Room Occupancy Hotels in Spokane, Washington, 1900 – 1910*. April 1993.

Houser, Michael. *Architectural Forms and Styles of Washington State (Draft)*. Washington State Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation; Olympia, WA: 2002.

Historic photographs. On file at the Whatcom Museum of History and Art Photo Archives.

Jandl, H. Ward. *Preservation Brief 11: Rehabilitating Historic Storefronts*. NPS Technical Preservation Services, Preservation Assistance Division; National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior: 1982.

Jewell, Jeffrey. "Early Trolley Service Right on Track," *The Bellingham Business Journal*, pp. 64-65: December 1998.

Jewell, Jeffrey. Photo Archivist, Whatcom Museum of History and Art, Bellingham, Washington. Interviews with Kathryn Franks, September, November and December 2002.

Koert, Dorothy. *A History of Whatcom County Theater*. Lynden Tribune; Lynden, WA: 1979.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham, Washington, 1882 - 1915

Whatcom County, Washington

Section I Page 28

I. Major Bibliographical References (cont.)

Koert, Dorothy and Biery, Galen. *Looking Back*. Lynden Tribune; Lynden, WA: 1980.

Lentz, Florence K. *National Register Nomination, Washington Grocery Warehouse Building, Bellingham, Washington*. June 1996.

Longstreth, Richard. *The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture*. National Trust for Historic Preservation; The Preservation Press: 1987.

McCarthy, Neil. *National Register of Historic Places Nomination, Oakland Block, Bellingham, Washington*. February 1999.

Murray, Keith A. *The Story of Banking in Whatcom County*. N.D.

Plat Maps. Town of New Whatcom, 1883; and Plat of Central Whatcom, 1884. On file at Whatcom County Assessors Office, Bellingham, WA.

Polk, R.L. *City Directories. Bellingham, Washington*. Various issues.

Reed, Roger G. *Multiple Property Documentation, Historic Resources of the Lewiston Commercial District, Lewiston, Maine*. March 1986.

Roth, Lottie Roeder. *History of Whatcom County, Washington: Volume I & II*. Pioneer Historical Publishing Company, Chicago/Seattle: 1926.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. Town of Whatcom, 1885 and 1888; Town of Sehome, 1885 and 1888; Town of New Whatcom (Sehome), 1890; Town of New Whatcom (Sehome and Whatcom) 1891 and 1897. On microfilm, Bellingham Public Library.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. City of Bellingham, 1904 and 1913. Books held at Whatcom Museum of History and Art; Bellingham, WA.

Scott, James W. and Turbeville, Daniel E. III. *Early Industries of Bellingham Bay and Whatcom County: A Photographic Essay*. Fourth Corner Registry; Bellingham, WA: 1980.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham, Washington, 1882 - 1915

Whatcom County, Washington

Section I Page 29

I. Major Bibliographical References (cont.)

Scott, James W. & Turbeville, Daniel E. III. *Whatcom County in Maps: 1832 - 1937*. Center for Pacific Northwest Studies & The Fourth Corner Registry; Bellingham, Washington: 1983.

Sehome History Group. *At Home on the Hill: An Historical Album of an Early 20th Century Neighborhood on Sehome Hill*. Self-published by the Sehome History Group; Bellingham, WA: 2000.

Sullivan, Michael, and Hollingsworth, Lynn. *National Register of Historic Places Nomination, Montague and McHugh Building, Bellingham, Washington*. March 1993.

Tetra Tech, Inc. *Bellingham Abandoned Mine Land Survey Final Report*. Englewood, Colorado, for the U.S. Department of the Interior Office of Surface Mining; Denver, Colorado: December 1984.

Upton, Dell. *Architecture in the United States*. Oxford University Press; Oxford, NY: 1998.

Van Miert, E. Rosamonde Ellis. *Old Hotels of the Bellingham Bay Cities: The Byron, The Leopold, The Henry, The Bellingham (Towers)*. 1998.

Whatcom County Souvenir: the Land of Opportunity, Bellingham, Washington. Parker Printing Company; Bellingham, WA: circa 1906.

Whatcom Creek: A Redevelopment Plan. Prepared for the City of Bellingham, December 1973.

What Style is it: A Guide to American Architecture. Preservation Press; John Wiley & Sons, Inc.: 1983.

Woodbridge, Sally B. and Montgomery, Roger. *A Guide to Architecture in Washington State: An Environmental Perspective*. University of Washington Press; Seattle, WA: 1980.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham, Washington, 1882 - 1915

Whatcom County, Washington

Section I Page 30

I. Major Bibliographical References (cont.)

Additional Documentation

The following photographs were obtained from the Whatcom Museum of History and Art:

1. Construction of the bridge between Holly Street in Sehome and 13th Street (later renamed Holly Street) in Whatcom, 1888.
2. View of Elk Street (currently known as State Street), *circa* 1886, facing north. (The road that would become Railroad Avenue is located to the left of Elk Street.)
3. View of Elk Street in 1907, facing north, at the intersection of Chestnut Street. The building in the foreground is the still extant Daylight Building, built in 1904 and designed by notable architect Frank C. Burns.
4. View of Elk Street *circa* 1910, facing south, with the Holly Street intersection in the distance. The building in the foreground on the right is the still extant Dahlquist Building, built in 1908 as one of Bellingham's first reinforced concrete commercial buildings.
5. View looking south along Railroad Avenue, *circa* 1910, toward the Holly Street intersection.
6. View looking east up Holly Street, 1914, from the intersection at Railroad Avenue. (The intersection in the distance is Elk Street.)
7. View looking west down Holly Street, 1914, toward the intersection at Elk Street. The building in the foreground on the left is the Exchange Building, built in 1906 - 07 and currently used as the Y.M.C.A.
8. View of the intersection of Bay, Prospect, and Holly Streets, 1913. The building on the left is Bellingham's first reinforced concrete "skyscraper," built in 1907 as the B & B Building and listed on the National Register in 1983. The building on the right is the Holly-Bay-Prospect Building, built in 1912.

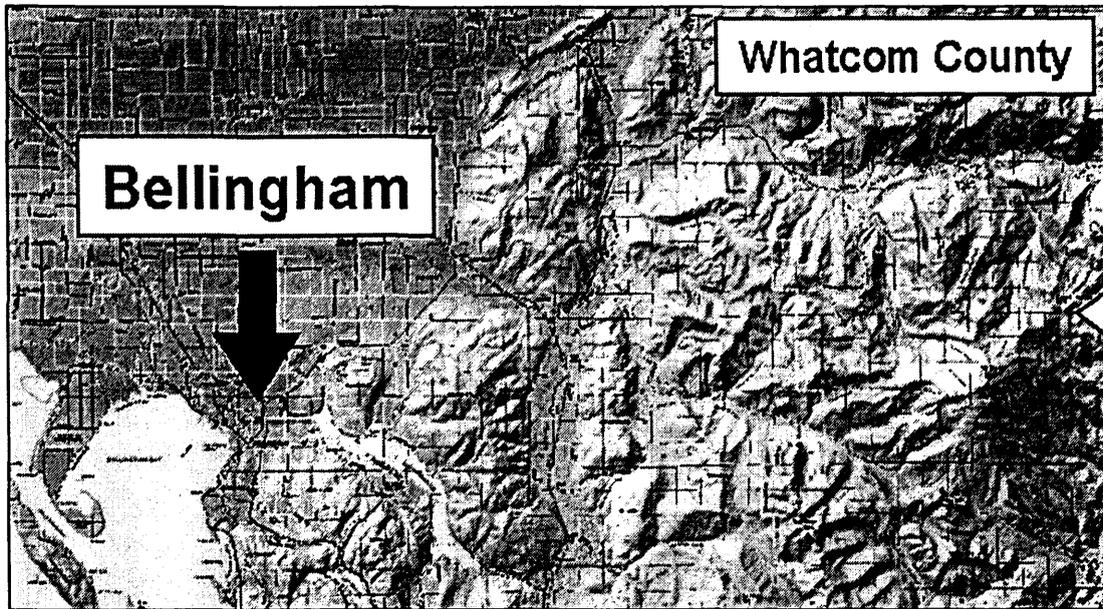


Figure 1: Location Map – Whatcom County

Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham, Washington, 1882 - 1915
 Whatcom County, Washington

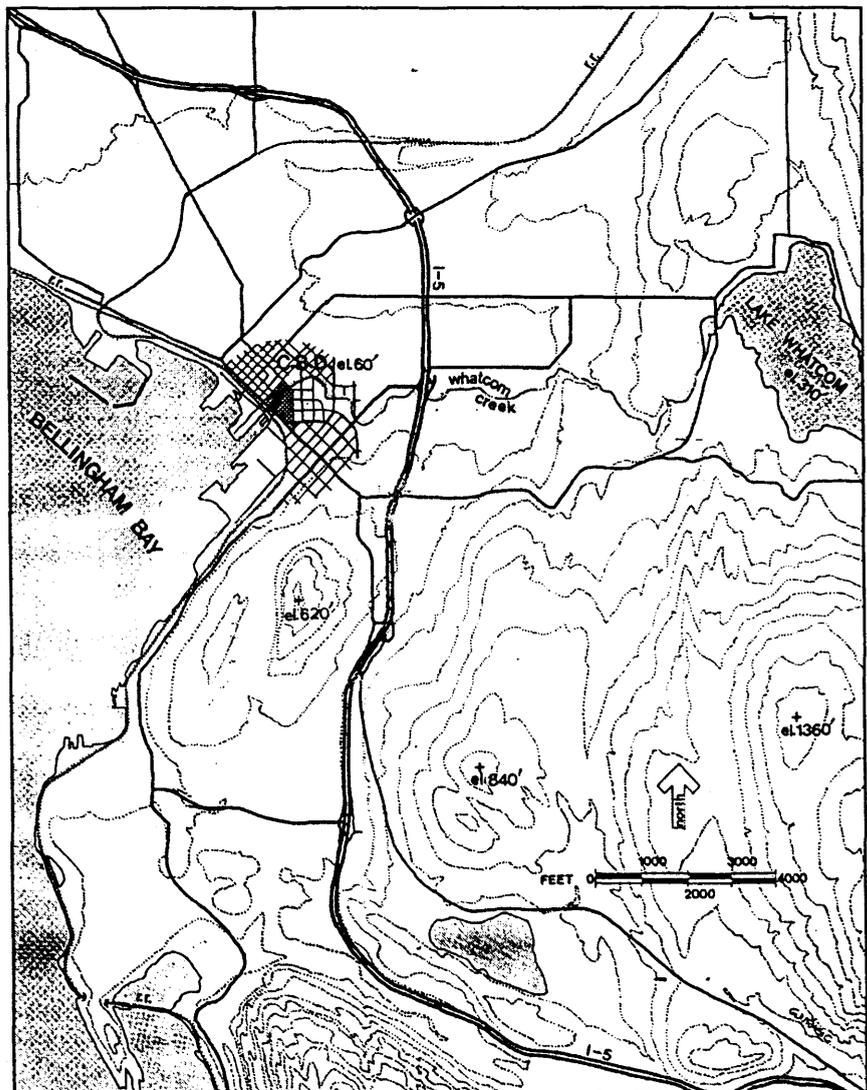


Figure 2: Location Map – Greater Bellingham Area

Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham, Washington, 1882 - 1915
 Whatcom County, Washington

(Map derived from *Whatcom Creek: A Redevelopment Plan*. Prepared for the City of Bellingham, December 1973.)

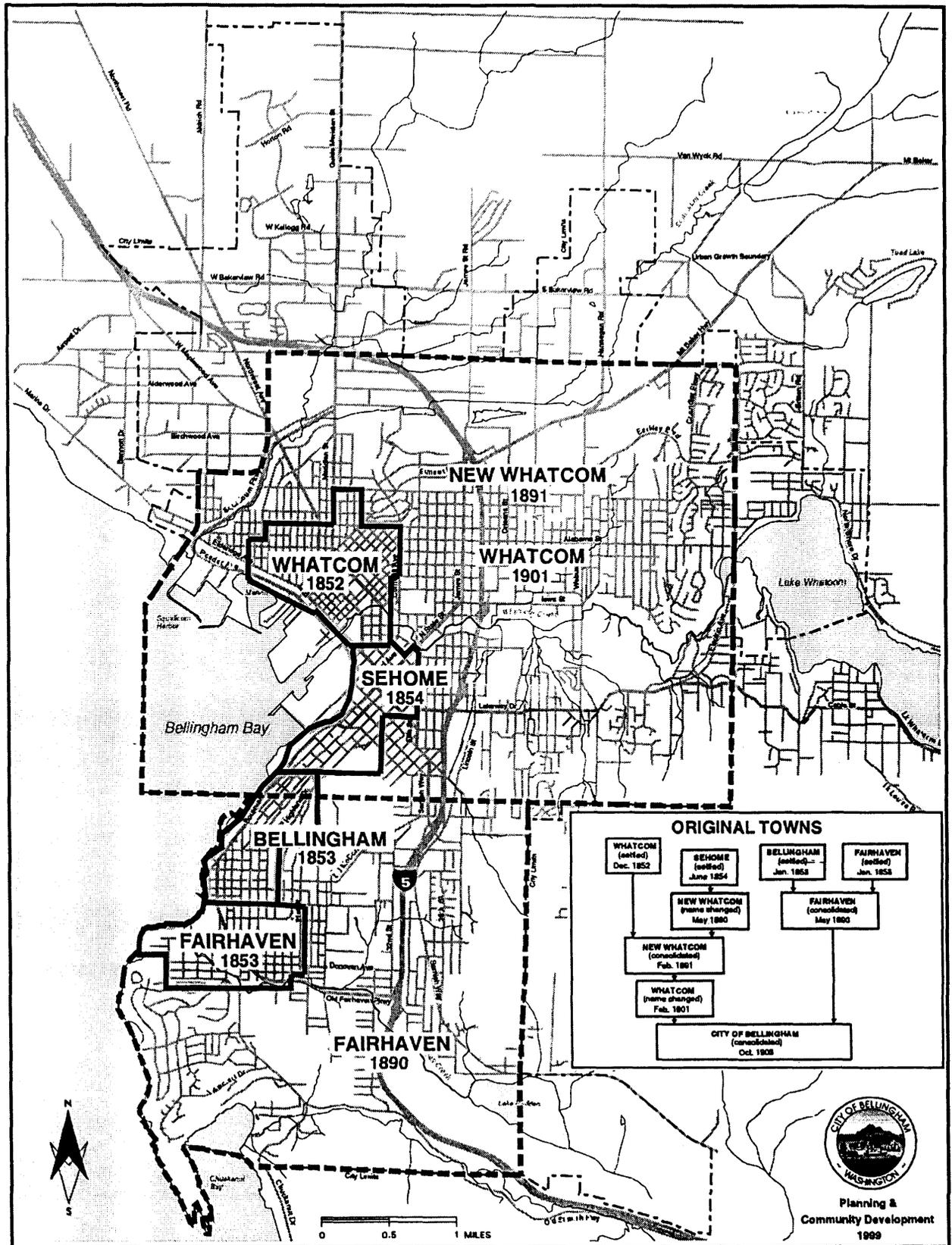


Figure 3: Original Towns of Bellingham Bay

Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham, Washington, 1882 - 1915
Whatcom County, Washington

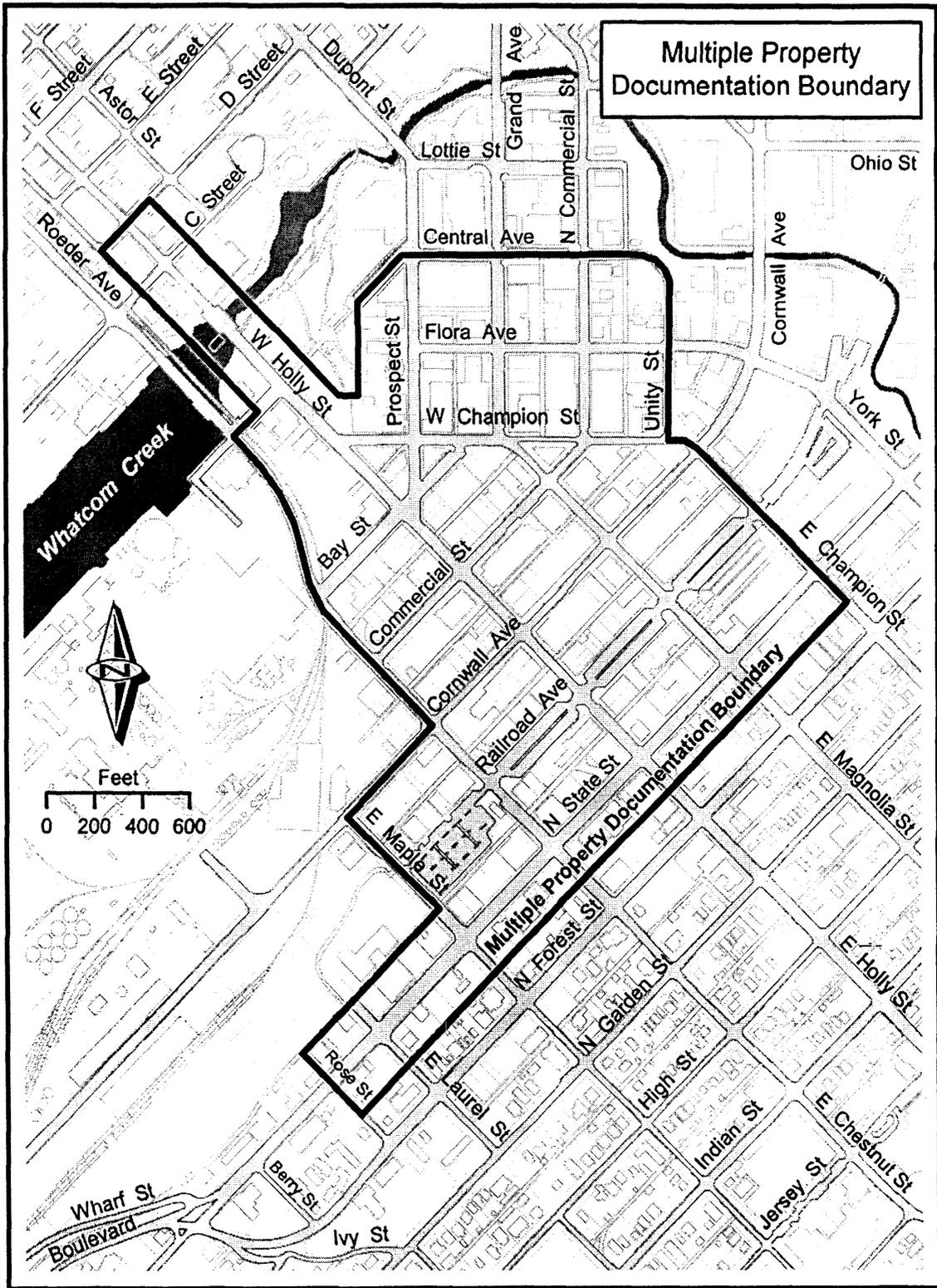


Figure 4: Multiple Property Documentation Boundary Map
 Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham, Washington, 1882 - 1915
 Whatcom County, Washington

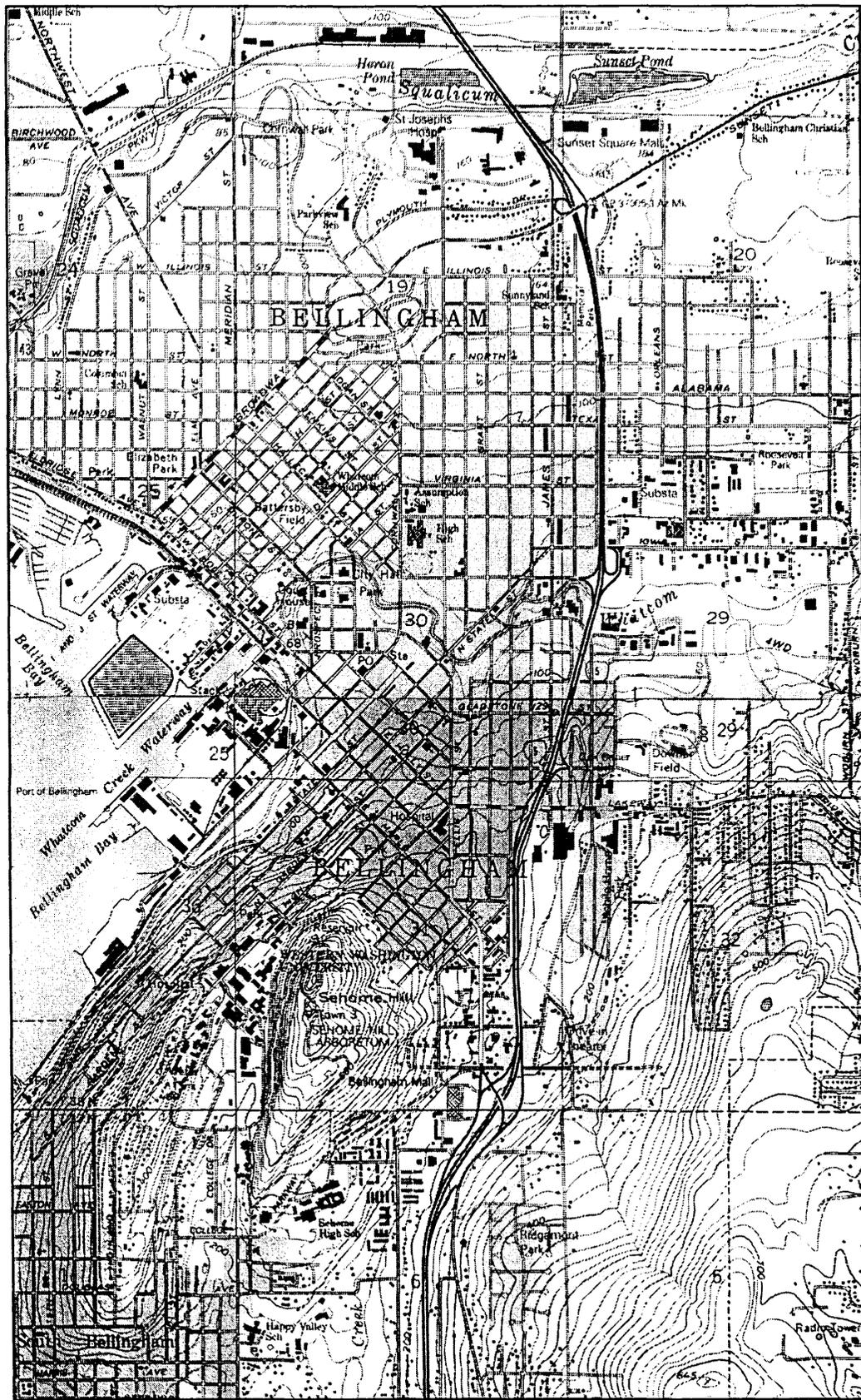


Figure 5: USGS Map of Bellingham

Commercial Buildings of the Central Business District of Bellingham, Washington, 1882 - 1915
 Whatcom County, Washington

(Bellingham North and South Quadrangles, Washington. United States Department of the Interior Geological Survey; produced by the United States Geological Survey; Revised 1994)