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Descriptive Report

Port Townsend Harbor Wash.

Sheet No 1. — Registry No = 2071
Sheet " 2 " " = 2072

1891

J. J. Gilbert

2071 2072

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Descriptive Report

Port Townsend Harbor, Wash

Sheet No. 1. - Register No 2071
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1891

J. J. Gilbert

Descriptive Report
Port Townsend, Wash.
Sheets. 1 and 2

These sheets represent a survey made by me, while detached from the Coast & Geodetic Survey, and acting under instructions of the Washington State Tide Land Commission.

I did not prepare a descriptive report, because I did not understand it was required, and at this late day (March 1900) I am preparing such a report as may be suggested by my memory, and by reference to the printed Chart.

I have no tracings of the original sheets, so not recalling their limits, I will treat both sheets as one, and this report may be applied to Either.

Port Townsend was settled in 1851,- in April of that year C.C. Bachelder and A.A. Plummer took up claims on Point Hudson, and in Nov. were joined by L.B. Hastings, J.W. Pettigrove, and J.G. Clinger.- All these took up claims within the limits of the present city of Port Townsend.

A company for merchandising and fishing was formed, and the Uncle Settlement named

from the Bay on which it was located.

The Custom House was removed from Olympia to Port Townsend at an early day, and, except during a brief transfer to Port Angeles, has remained here.

As all vessels entering the Sound were obliged to land at Port Townsend, it became an important supply station, and it has led all other points, in the completeness of its stock of chandlery and other ships supplies, until the last few years, when the making of sub ports at Seattle and Tacoma, has changed the old regime, and the number of entries at Port Townsend is greatly reduced.

About the same time that that epidemic struck Olympia, Fairhaven, Whatcom, Anacortes, and other places, the "boom" struck Port Townsend also. - Additions to the city were made, streets graded, great tracts cleared and laid out into blocks. Electric railways were opened extending miles into the country. Many new brick stores were built - others were begun but not finished before the boom collapsed.

The boom of Puget Sound cities began in 1890 - and began to collapse within about eighteen months. - Sooner in some cases.

The Effect at Port Townsend, as elsewhere, was greatly to extend the city limits, - as the State Harbor-lines extend along the water front of all incorporated towns, and for one mile beyond. These sheets cover a long stretch of shore line, beginning south of the wharf at the old Port Townsend Military Station, and extending for one or two miles around Point Wilson.

Beginning at the Military Station (which was first established during the Civil war.) the shore line is a high unbroken bluff for about one mile, the beach, gravel above and sand below. - This stretch is in a N. W. direction, and at the end of one mile the shore bends & trends N. E. - across a low sand flat, covered with wild rose, and other bushes, to a high broken bluff - half a mile long and 160 feet high; At the N.E. end of the bluff is a great salt marsh, behind a gravel spit; it has now been drained, but in old times was quite impassible. A street running N. and S. has been opened through the center of this marsh, and at the foot of the street a long wharf built out to deep water. After crossing the marsh, the shore-line strikes a high, almost perpendicular bluff, which, in a short distance recedes from the

beach, and here begins the low gravel spit which forms Point-Hudson, and where all the business of Port-Townsend has been located. From this gravel spit the wharves are built. The low ground & marsh back of spit has been largely filled and covered with buildings.

The beach from the bend N. of the military post to the bluff under the Custom House, is broad and sandy, along the spit and half-way around to Point-Wilson it is gravel.- The beach is narrow and the water bold along the S.E. face of Point-Hudson, but on the N.E. face it is broad, and the water shallow for a little distance - when it suddenly drops off. Vessels coming from the North should give this point a wide berth. Keeping outside of the red spar buoy.

At the North base of the Point-Hudson spit the bluff begins again and continues a high broken bluff as far as the base of Point-Wilson.- The beach along this bluff is gravel, with occasionally boulders.

Point-Wilson is a sand spit making out about half a mile from the bluff high land. The portion next the bluff and next the North

Shore is covered with high, irregular sand dunes, and a growth of small, stunted fir or pine trees.

The beach on south side of Point Wilson is sandy and narrow, with deep water close to low water mark. It is also bold just off the point. On the north side of the point the beach is broad, hard sand and some gravel.

Vessels running up against a strong ebb tide, and keeping too close to the point, have several times been swept in on the beach near the point. And when there is any sea running, it is a dangerous point to ground upon.

The hill at the base of Point Wilson, is called Point Wilson Hill, it is a Military reserve, and during the last two or three years, 1898–90 the Army Engineers have been building a fort there, one of the three great forts to protect the Entrance to Puget Sound. The others being at Admiralty Head and Marrowstone Point.

The bluff at the West base of Point Wilson is very high, and nearly perpendicular. It gradually falls, going west to the low land one mile from the Point, behind which is some fresh marsh. – Crossing the low land the beach again becomes broken bluff

to the end of the sheet. The beach is gravel and sand. - and quite broad. it is quite shallow beyond low water, with a hard sandy bottom, and occasional boulders, large and small. Large patches of kelp line the shore. There is fair anchorage along this shore during a S.E. storm.

While the Bay of Port Townsend is commodious, and of a good depth throughout, making it the best harbor on the Sound for a fleet of vessels. Yet South East gales sweep through from the head of the harbor, with terrific force. Making a very heavy sea along the wharves, and small craft have no business at the wharves then.

At the time of this survey, in 1891, Port Townsend had reached its greatest limits, and the boom was already subsiding. The following years of stringent times were particularly hard on this city. Gradually the electric roads were shortened, and finally suspended, and at last not only the cars, but the wire and the rails were removed and sold.

Some of the cars went to Victoria, some to Seattle, some to Olympia.

The population of 6000 or more in 1891 has dwindled to less than 3000. The business has gone to Seattle and Tacoma.

The Port-Townsend Southern Rail Road, only runs twenty miles or so, ending at Quilcene Bay.

The hydrography was done with steam launch, and row boat, and was very carefully done. There are no dangers whatever, as the broad beaches at Points Hudson and Wilson can hardly be classed as such.

There is a good Light-House, and fog whistle at Point-Wilson, and a stake light at Point-Hudson.

The business of Port-Townsend is merchandising. The Custom House and Marine Hospital bring some trade. The small saw mill at Point-Hudson does little more than supply local demand.

The site on the top of the bluff is fairly level, and the outlook is fine.

J. J. Gilbert
Assist. C. & G. Survey