

Shelton, Washington

People and Place

Location

Shelton is located on Oakland Bay, an inlet of southwest Puget Sound, and covers approximately 5.6 square miles of land and 0.3 square miles of water. Shelton is approximately 22 miles northwest of Olympia and 82 driving miles from Seattle. The geographic coordinates of Shelton, Washington, are: 47°12'55" N, 123°05'58"W.

Demographic Profile

According to the 2000 U.S. Census the population of Shelton was 8442, a 16.6% increase from the 1990 U.S. Census. In 2000 the gender structure was evenly divided with slightly more females (51.4%) than males (48.6%). The median age in 2000 was 35.8, which is comparable to the national median of 35.3 for the same year. According to the same data, 22% of the population was 14 years of age or younger and 37.6% was between the ages of 25 and 54. For the population 18 years and over, 75.6% had a high school education or higher, 11.6% had attained a Bachelor's degree or higher, and 3.0% earned a graduate or professional degree; as compared to the national averages of 79.9%, 22.3%, and 7.8% respectively.

The 2000 U.S. Census shows that the racial composition was predominantly White (85.8%), followed by American Indian and Alaskan Native (2.7%) and Asian (1.2%). Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander and Black or African American both comprised less than one percent of the population in 2000, at 0.73% and 0.36% respectively. Overall, 5.8% classified themselves as belonging to some other race and 3.4% of the population identified themselves with two or more races. A total of 10.9% identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino. Of the total population 8.5% was foreign-born, 72.4% of which were born in Latin America including Mexico (43.5%) and Guatemala (28.9%).

History

The first European exploration of what would become Mason County, Washington was completed by Lieutenant Charles Wilkes and his expeditionary team around 1839. The expedition encountered the Skokomish and Squaxin Island Tribes, native inhabitants to the area. The diet of these tribes consisted mainly of salmon, berries, and roots. For a decade after its formation in 1854, Mason County was known as named Sahewamish County, named after one of the region's smaller tribes. The county was renamed in 1864 to honor Charles Mason, the first secretary to the Washington Territorial Legislature. The town of Oakland, now extinct but then roughly two miles north of present-day Shelton, was the original County Seat of Mason County. In 1888, allegedly due to the fact that Oakland residents would not allow a saloon in town, Shelton, referred to as Sheltonville prior to 1888, was selected as the new County Seat. Shelton quickly became the center of local commerce, particularly for timber interests.

Mason County's economic structure was largely built upon the logging industry. Lumber mills quickly followed as logging commenced. Adding to local prosperity was the miles of rail laid by the region's logging and lumber interests.¹ Three railroads operated out of the area by 1887, moving timber within the borders of Mason County. Farming, fishing, and the oyster industry were also beginning in other areas of the county at that time.² Oysters were a valuable local commodity, so much so that local oyster beds were all but depleted by 1887. This resulted

in the creation of the Puget Sound Oyster Association. By 1902, hundreds of acres of Mason County waters were under cultivation, annually producing more than 25,000 sacks of oysters. By 1888, Shelton had grown into a fair-sized city with a newspaper, schools, hotels, a funeral home, and railroads. Today forest products and aquaculture maintain prominence in the local economy.

Squaxin Island Tribal members are direct descendants of the maritime people who lived and prospered along the shores and watersheds of South Puget Sound for centuries. Known as the “People of the Water,” the tribe is comprised of seven bands that inhabited the headwaters of seven inlets. Squaxin Island Tribe was one of the first Native American Tribes to participate in the federal government’s Self Governance Demonstration Project. They moved to their reservation in modern-day Mason County in 1855. In addition to Reservation lands on the mainland, the Squaxin Island Reservation occupies most of Squaxin Island, a small island north of Olympia. The Tribe has sole access to the uninhabited Island for fishing, hunting, camping, and recreational activities. Tribal headquarters are located in Shelton. The governing body is the Squaxin Island Tribal Council consisting of five persons elected to three-year terms by the general council. The tribe operates a health clinic providing primary care and dental services.

Infrastructure

Current Economy

Taylor Shellfish Farms and Green Diamond Lumber (formerly Simpson Lumber) are the two major employers in Shelton. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 53.5% of the potential labor force was employed and there was an 8.5% unemployment rate (calculated by dividing the unemployed population by the labor force), slightly higher than the national average of 5.7% for the same year. Of the population over the age of 16, 41.6% were not in the labor force. Of the employed civilian population, 17.0% worked in ‘Educational, health and social services’ the majority of those falling under ‘Health care and social assistance.’ ‘Retail trade,’ ‘Public administration,’ and ‘Manufacturing’ contributed 13.2%, 12.9%, and 10.8% to the civilian workforce respectively. In addition, 5.9% of the employed civilian population over the age of 16 was involved in ‘Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting’ according to the 2000 U.S. Census. A total of 25.6% of the employed civilian population worked within government at some level (local, state, or Federal); 3.5% of which were reported as working in ‘Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting.’

Shelton’s per capita income in 1999 was \$16,303 according to the 2000 U.S. Census, while the median household income was \$32,500. In 1999, according to the 2000 U.S. Census, 18.9% of the population was below the poverty level. In 2000, 78.3% of the population lived in family households. In the same year there were 3403 housing units in Shelton, 93.8% of which were occupied and 6.2% were vacant. Of the occupied housing units, 60.1% were owner occupied while 39.9% were renter occupied. Of the vacant housing units 37.3% were for rent and 27.4% were for ‘sale only.’

Governance

The City of Shelton was incorporated on 22 January, 1889. Shelton’s commission style of government is unique in Washington State. The City is governed by a three-member commission where members are elected to four-year terms as either the Mayor, Commissioner of Public Works, or Commissioner of Public Safety. Shelton levies an 8.3% sales and use tax and a 10.3% lodging tax.

Several taxes directly impact commercial and recreational fishermen. Commercial fishermen operating in Washington waters are subject to the Business and Occupation (B&O) tax under the “extraction” classification (0.48%); those fishing outside of Washington waters but selling fish within Washington are subject to the tax under either the “wholesaling” or “retailing” classifications (0.48% and 0.47% respectively), unless the fish are sold in interstate or foreign commerce.³ Those who both catch and sell fish in Washington are eligible for a Multiple Activities Tax Credit (MATC).⁴

Washington State levies a Food, Fish, and Shellfish Tax, paid by the first commercial processor of food fish or shellfish, including: Chinook, coho, and chum salmon or eggs (5.62%); sockeye and pink salmon or eggs (3.37%); oysters (0.09%); sea urchins/cucumbers (4.92%); and shellfish and other food fish or eggs (2.25%). Tuna, mackerel, and jackfish are exempt from this tax. Additionally, there is an Enhanced Food Fish Tax, which applies to the “first possession of enhanced food fish by an owner in Washington State” and is based on the “value of the enhanced food fish at the point of landing.”⁵ The rate of the tax depends upon the species of fish or shellfish.

Vessels used for commercial fishing purposes part-time are subject to an annual Washington State Watercraft Excise Tax levied at 0.5% of the fair market value of the boat. Vessels used for commercial fishing purposes full-time are subject to personal property taxes at the base rate levied by the state. Washington also levies a 10% excise tax on fishing equipment, a three percent tax on electric motors and sonar fish finders, and import duties on tackle and pleasure boats to fund sportfish restoration programs.⁶ Washington State levies a tax of \$0.28 per gallon on motor vehicle fuel. Since most of this tax is used to maintain terrestrial roadways, Washington boaters are entitled to a refund of about \$0.17 per gallon. The difference includes state sales tax and a penny per gallon contribution to a Coastal Protection Fund. Most diesel fuel sold at docks has already had this tax removed.⁷

The nearest federal fisheries enforcement office is located in Seattle and is the Northwest Enforcement Office of the National Marine Fisheries Service. The closest regional office for state fisheries, the Coastal Office of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife is located 35 miles west in Montesano, Washington. Meetings of the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council and Pacific Fisheries Management Council have been held in both Seattle and Tacoma. Also located in Seattle are the headquarters of the 13th U.S. Coast Guard District and the District Office of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). The Squaxin Island Tribe’s Natural Resource and Public Safety offices are located in Shelton. Public Safety officers patrol the Squaxin Island Reservation and South Puget Sound waterways.⁸

Facilities

Shelton lies just east of Highway 101 that runs from Olympia, around the Olympic Peninsula, and south along the Oregon and California coasts. The nearest major airport, Sea-Tac International Airport, is approximately 71 miles away in Sea Tac, Washington.

Shelton’s public school system consists of six elementary schools, four middle schools (including one ‘alternative’ middle school), and two high schools. Private Christian and Adventist schools, provide education for grades 1-12 and 1-8 respectively. The 27-acre Olympic College is located in Shelton and provides a variety of programs including vocational and technical degrees. Shelton offers city-owned and operated water, sewer, and garbage service, as well as a curbside recycling program. Public safety is administered by the City of Shelton’s Police and Fire Departments. Health services are provided by countywide 911 emergency

dispatching services and Mason General Hospital, located in Shelton. There is at least one motel located in Shelton.

The Port of Shelton consists of a small airport, two industrial complexes, and a marina. The Port is governed by a three-member commission. Commissioners are elected to six-year terms by residents of Mason County. The Marina, located within Shelton city limits, is currently managed by the Shelton Yacht Club. The Marina has 106 slips and offers both visitor and permanent moorage with emergency haul-outs, a public boat ramp, gas dock, and berthing for Shelton-based watercraft up to 50-feet. There are numerous other marine facilities in Shelton. Jarrell's Cove on Harstine Island is privately owned and provides overnight and permanent moorage, a pump-out station, and an easy-access fuel dock. Jarrell's Cove State Park is also located on Harstine Island. This facility provides a moorage dock and buoys, a pump-out station, 20 tent sites, toilets, showers, picnic shelters, and group facilities. Hope Island State Park is a 106-acre marine camping park on a quiet, boat access only island with five buoys. Moorage fees are charged year-round for mooring at docks, floats, and buoys. Public launching with parking for vehicles and boat trailers is available at Arcadia Point, owned by the Squaxin Island Indian Tribe.

Involvement in West Coast Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

In 2000 landings were delivered to Shelton by 499 vessels, including: 6 commercial vessels, 117 personal use vessels, and 375 Tribal commercial vessels. The remaining vessel types are confidential. In the same year landings in Shelton were made in the following West Coast fisheries (data shown represents landings in metric tons/value of said landings/number of vessels making landings): crab (19 t/ \$87,042/ 22), salmon (502 t/ \$647,097/ 245), shellfish (245 t/ \$1,878,716/372), shrimp (1.9mt/ \$11,347/7), and other species (49 t/ \$42,740/6).

Shelton residents owned a total of three vessels in 2000, all of them participated in the federal groundfish fishery. According to recorded data the number of vessels owned by Shelton residents in 2000 that participated in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: crab (1/0/0), groundfish (0/0/NA), highly migratory species (NA/0/NA), salmon (3/1/0), shellfish (NA/0/NA), shrimp (NA/0/0), and other species (3/0/0).⁹

One federal groundfish permit was held by a Shelton resident in 2000. In the same year recorded data indicates that the number of Shelton residents holding permits in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: crab (1/0/0), highly migratory species (NA/0/0), salmon (4/1/0), shellfish (1/0/NA), and other species(3/0/0).¹⁰

Thirteen state commercial fishing permits were registered to Shelton residents in 2000. In the same year recorded data indicates that the number of state permits held by Shelton residents in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: crab (1/0/0), salmon (6/1/0), shellfish (1/0/NA), and other species (4/0/0).¹¹

There were at least three seafood processors operating in Shelton in 2000. Specific information (pounds of product/value of product) is confidential. Oysters were the primary product of Shelton-based processors in 2000.

Shellfish have been a mainstay for the Squaxin Island people for thousands of years and remain important today for subsistence, economic, and ceremonial purposes. The Squaxin Island Tribe runs Harstine Oyster Company and in cooperation with the State of Washington, operates one of largest salmon net pen programs in the Northwest. The net pen facility, located between Squaxin and Harstine Islands releases about two million coho salmon into Puget Sound each

year. According to their Annual Report, 203 tribal members harvested 305,934 lbs of Manila clams and 2858 lbs of Little Neck Clams from 13 beaches in 2003. In two areas, 57 tribal members harvested 298,423 lbs of geoduck and 3448 lbs of Horse clams. According to the same report, 57 tribal members harvested 14,398 lbs of Chinook, 325,039 lbs of coho, and 77,938 lbs of chum salmon.¹²

Sportfishing

At least one salmonid charter business operates out of Shelton. A total of five vendors are licensed to sell sportfishing permits in Shelton. In 2003 Shelton vendors made 11,587 sportfishing license transactions totaling just over \$187,931. The annual sport salmon catch in Washington State's Catch Record Card Area 13 (South Puget Sound) was 5131 during the 2000-2001 license year. Based on catch card data, during 26,089 marine angler trips sportfishermen took 1649 Chinook, 2226 coho, and 1256 chum salmon. The bottomfish catch in Area 13 during the 2000-2001 license year totaled 8025. The recreational harvest of clams (lbs) and oysters (#) for the same area in 2000 was estimated to be 30,147 and 65,007 respectively; harvest occurred over an estimated 7065 user trips. Littleneck and Manila clams accounted for 45.6% and 32.2% of the total clam harvest respectively.

Subsistence

Subsistence harvest for marine species may exist in the Shelton area. However, the extent of subsistence harvesting is difficult to quantify due to a scarcity of data.

Involvement in North Pacific Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

In 2000 a total of five vessels owned by Shelton residents participated in North Pacific fisheries. These vessels landed approximately 124 t in the Alaska salmon fishery, valuing over \$183,000. In the same year, one vessel owned by a Shelton resident made landings in the North Pacific herring fishery, but specific information (landings in metric tons/value of landings) is confidential.

Twenty-one Shelton residents served as crewmembers in North Pacific fisheries in 2000. In the same year the number of residents holding federal and state commercial fishing permits was five and nine respectively.

In 2000 a total of 14 North Pacific commercial fishing permits were held by Shelton residents. Community members held 115,207 halibut Individual Fishing Quota shares in the same year. A total of 6 salmon, 3 shellfish, 2 herring, and 1 Bering Sea Aleutian Islands groundfish Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) permits were held by Shelton residents in 2000. One groundfish License Limitation Program (LLP) permit was held by a community member in the same year.

Sportfishing

In 2000 a total of 163 Alaskan sportfishing licenses were purchased by Shelton residents.

¹ City of Shelton. No Date. History of Shelton in Mason County, [Online]. Available: URL: http://www.ci.shelton.wa.us/shelton's_history.htm (access date - August 2004).

² Shelton-Mason County Chamber of Commerce. No Date. History, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.sheltonchamber.org/history.xml> (access date - August 2004).

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- ³ Washington State Department of Revenue. 2004. Commercial fishing, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://dor.wa.gov/content/taxes/Industry/Fish/default.aspx> (access date - July 2004).
- ⁴ Washington State Department of Revenue. 2002. Information on Washington's Tax Structure: Fish Taxes, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://dor.wa.gov/content/taxes/industry/fish/default.aspx> (access date - July 2004).
- ⁵ Washington State Department of Revenue. 2001. Commercial Fishing, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://dor.wa.gov/content/taxes/Industry/Fish/default.aspx#enhanced> (access date - July.2004).
- ⁶ National Conference of State Legislatures. 2004. Environment, Energy, and Transportation Program: Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.ncsl.org/programs/esnr/FISHHUNTWILD.htm> (access date - July 2004).
- ⁷ Washington State Department of Licensing. 2003. Fuel Tax Frequently Asked Questions, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.dol.wa.gov/vs/ft-faq.htm> (access date - July 2004).
- ⁸ Squaxin Island Tribe. No Date. Public Safety, [Online]. Available: URL: <http://www.squaxinland.org/frames.html> (access date - August 2004).
- ⁹ 'NA' refers to data which was not available, for example, due to few or no recorded permit numbers, or the partially permitted nature of a fishery in 2000.
- ¹⁰ 'NA' refers to data which was not available, for example, due to few or no recorded permit numbers, or the partially permitted nature of a fishery in 2000.
- ¹¹ 'NA' refers to data which was not available, for example, due to few or no recorded permit numbers, or the partially permitted nature of a fishery in 2000.
- ¹² Squaxin Island Tribe. 2004. Annual Report 2003, [Online]. Available: URL: www.squaxinland.org/frames.html (access date - August 2004).