

THE ERECTION OF KITSAP COUNTY*

The erection of Kitsap County was instigated by the three first mill companies who, between 1851 and 1854, began operations within its future boundaries, and their early history is the early history of that county. They were the G. A. Meiggs' Company on Port Madison Bay, the Renton, Howard and Fitzpatrick Company, located on what is now called Enetai Beach, Port Orchard Bay—both Bays were then part of King County—and the Puget Mill Company on Port Gamble Bay, then part of Jefferson County. The Port Gamble Company's town was known as "Teekalet."

Surrounded by the most magnificent stand of timber on the Sound, the mill companies prospered mightily. During the Indian uprising of 1856 the Port Gamble Company was in a financial position to offer Governor Stevens the maintenance for the duration of the war, of one of their ships fully manned and equipped for military duty. The Port Orchard Company's schooner *Isaac I. Stevens* did transport duty for the Government. But, the Port Madison Company did not prevent Chief Kitsap of the Suquamish tribe—their near neighbors—from taking sides against the whites. He is said to have had a hand in the White River affair in which Lieutenant Slaughter of the United States Army lost his life, much to the regret of the early settlers. But, the Indian War did not retard the growing business of these mill companies.

So attractive was the condition of these mills and that of their surrounding towns, that by the close of 1856 we find the majority of the voters in King County were on the Kitsap Peninsula depending upon the mill companies for a livelihood. The Puget Mill Company's resident manager, Capt. J. P. Keller, was then County Commissioner of Jefferson County, which speaks for the political power of that company. The Territorial Auditor valued the baronial holdings of these three mill companies at about half the amount of such valuations for the entire Territory.

With so much of wealth and political power in their hands, we do not wonder that the mill companies began an agitation for better and more convenient local government. In view of these facts the Renton and Meiggs' interests sent Timothy Duane Hinckley, an employee of the Port Orchard Mill Company, to the Territorial Assembly of 1856-57 as a Representative from King County with instructions to "bring home" a new county.

To the same Legislative Assembly, the Puget Mill Company

*Miss Sutton read this paper before the Pioneer Association assembled at Bremerton on January 21, 1933, in honor of the birthday of Kitsap County.—EDITOR.

sent one of their employees, A. S. Wilson, as Representative for Jefferson County, with the same instructions.

By the end of January "our ancestors" from both the north and south ends of our present county were at Olympia lobbying for the erection of a new county.

On January 9, 1857, Mr. Hinckley of King County, presented to the House of Representatives the petition of "certain citizens of King County, praying to be set off into a new county," accompanied by a bill to create the County of "Madison." The petition and the bill were referred to the Committee on Counties of which J. A. Phillips of King County was Chairman.

On January 10, Mr. Wilson, the Jefferson County Representative, presented "a petition of A. S. Miller and 45 others of Jefferson County praying to be set off from Jefferson County in a new county to be called 'Madison'." A. S. Miller was a logger for the Puget Mill Company. On the same day, January 10, F. W. Pettigrove, a merchant of Port Townsend, and "18 others of Jefferson County filed a remonstrance against any division of said county." Both the petition and the remonstrance from Jefferson County were referred to the Committee on Counties.

On January 12, Mr. Hinckley, of King County, presented a second petition from King County citizens praying to be set off into a new county. It is not unlikely that a delegation had arrived from Port Madison with this petition. It, too, was referred to the Committee on Counties.

It appears from reading the *House Journal*, that Mr. Wilson saw that he was not going to be able, owing to the strong opposition from Port Townsend citizens, to have a new county created for the convenience of the Puget Mill Company. Therefore, he joined forces with the Port Madison and Port Orchard representatives and on January 12, presented the petition of D. S. Howard, part owner of the Port Orchard Company, and "27 others of King County, praying for the formation of a new county out of King and Jefferson Counties."

The second petition from the people of Port Orchard and Port Madison together with the influence of the Jefferson County Representative appears to have had weight with the Committee, for the following day Mr. Hinckley's Bill, now known as "House Bill Number 27" was reported back from the Committee with an amendment and a recommendation for its passage. It was passed the same day, January 13, and sent to the Council.

When presented to the upper house, Mr. Poe, of Jefferson

County, stood out resolutely against it. He moved that it be laid on the table. The motion was lost. At the first reading, Mr. Abernathy of Wahkiakum County, moved to strike out the name "Madison" and insert the name "Slaughter." The motion carried. At the third reading of the bill the ballot was taken and stood seven members for passage and Mr. Poe opposed. The bill was returned to the House where it was signed and became a law, January 16, 1857.

There was much dissatisfaction among the mill companies' lobbyists over the name "Slaughter." There was a bill introduced into the House on January 19, proposing to change the name of the new county. The bill died in the House. However, on January 27, 1857, "An Act, Supplementary to an Act to create and organize the County of Slaughter" became a law. This law gave the "legal voters of Slaughter County at their next annual election the right to decide by ballot a name for said county." This election came off on July 13, 1857. The decision of the ballot was to replace the name of "Slaughter" with that of "Kitsap." Notice of the change was sent to the Territorial Secretary and as Kitsap County it has been known ever since.

An early historian laments that the name of the gallant Lieutenant Slaughter should have been replaced by the name of the man who killed him. Another writer, however, says that there was an older Chief Kitsap who fell in with Admiral Vancouver off the shore of the present Kitsap County and served as that immortal explorer's pilot for his trip up Sound. This Kitsap is represented as a man of sterling character, brave and trustworthy. The word "Kitsap" is said to mean brave. Let us hope that it was the elder chief our ancestors had in mind when they cast their decisive ballot 76 years ago.

CHLOE SUTTON