





THE CHANGING URBAN STRUCTURE OF TACOMA, WASHINGTON

by

RONALD LEE McCONNELL

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF URBAN PLANNING

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

1965

Approved by

*Richard L. Cheney, Jr.*

(Chairman of Supervisory Committee)

Department

*URBAN PLANNING*

(Departmental Faculty Sponsoring Candidate)

Date

*MAY 27, 1965*

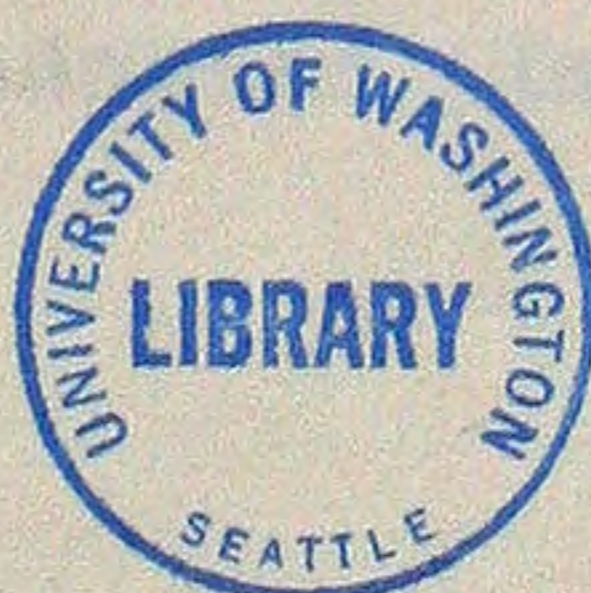


In presenting this thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of Washington I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for inspection. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by my major professor, or, in his absence, by the Director of Libraries. It is understood that any copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Signature

Ronald L. McConnell

Date

May 27, 1965



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

| CHAPTER                                                     | PAGE |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .                                   | 1    |
| II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON URBAN STRUCTURE . . . . .       | 3    |
| The Community . . . . .                                     | 3    |
| Theories of Urbanism . . . . .                              | 4    |
| Theories of Urban Structure and Land Use Patterns . . . . . | 5    |
| Changes in the Urban Structure . . . . .                    | 10   |
| III. HISTORY OF LAND SETTLEMENT IN TACOMA: EARLY PERIOD     |      |
| 1792-1873 . . . . .                                         | 13   |
| Exploration . . . . .                                       | 13   |
| Early Settlers in the Area . . . . .                        | 14   |
| Early Settlers on Commencement Bay . . . . .                | 15   |
| McCarver and "Old Town" . . . . .                           | 16   |
| IV. HISTORY OF LAND SETTLEMENT IN TACOMA: FIRST RAILROAD    |      |
| ERA AND BOOM PERIOD 1873-1891 . . . . .                     | 26   |
| New Tacoma . . . . .                                        | 26   |
| Planning in New Tacoma . . . . .                            | 27   |
| The Railroad Reaches the Bay . . . . .                      | 31   |
| Population Growth . . . . .                                 | 32   |
| Consolidation of New Tacoma and Old Tacoma . . . . .        | 34   |
| Rapid Expansion and Speculation . . . . .                   | 35   |
| Suburban Development . . . . .                              | 40   |
| V. HISTORY OF LAND SETTLEMENT IN TACOMA: DEPRESSION         |      |
| AND SECOND RAILROAD ERA 1892-1920 . . . . .                 | 42   |
| Depression and Expansion Curtailment . . . . .              | 42   |



## CHAPTER

## PAGE

|                                                                                               |    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Klondike Gold Rush . . . . .                                                                  | 44 |
| Weyerhaeuser Timber Company . . . . .                                                         | 45 |
| Second Railroad Building Period . . . . .                                                     | 45 |
| Stadium High School . . . . .                                                                 | 47 |
| State Capital . . . . .                                                                       | 48 |
| Ruston . . . . .                                                                              | 49 |
| Population Growth . . . . .                                                                   | 49 |
| Tideflats Plan . . . . .                                                                      | 50 |
| World War I . . . . .                                                                         | 51 |
| Establishment of City Planning Commission . . . . .                                           | 52 |
| End of Railroad Era . . . . .                                                                 | 53 |
| VI. HISTORY OF LAND SETTLEMENT IN TACOMA: LUMBER<br>CAPITAL AND WAR YEARS 1922-1945 . . . . . | 56 |
| Lumber Capital . . . . .                                                                      | 56 |
| Decline in Trade with Orient . . . . .                                                        | 57 |
| City and Industrial Expansion . . . . .                                                       | 57 |
| Zoning . . . . .                                                                              | 57 |
| Depression . . . . .                                                                          | 58 |
| Planning During the Depression . . . . .                                                      | 61 |
| "Gallopig Gertie" . . . . .                                                                   | 62 |
| Population Growth . . . . .                                                                   | 63 |
| World War II . . . . .                                                                        | 64 |
| Planning During World War II . . . . .                                                        | 64 |
| VII. HISTORY OF LAND SETTLEMENT IN TACOMA: POSTWAR ERA<br>1946-1965 . . . . .                 | 71 |
| Continued Urban Growth . . . . .                                                              | 71 |



## CHAPTER

## PAGE

|                                                |    |
|------------------------------------------------|----|
| Fife and Tidehaven . . . . .                   | 72 |
| Planning Activity Since World War II . . . . . | 73 |
| Development in Pierce County . . . . .         | 79 |
| VIII. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS . . . . .        | 81 |
| Historical Resume . . . . .                    | 81 |
| Changes in Spatial Structure . . . . .         | 84 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .                         | 91 |



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

| FIGURE |                                                                                | PAGE |
|--------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 1.     | Tacoma Harbor in 1868. Map of Land Claims,<br>Tacoma Townsite . . . . .        | 18   |
| 2.     | General McCarver's Plat of Tacoma: 1868 . . . . .                              | 20   |
| 3.     | Points of Interest: Chapter III . . . . .                                      | 25   |
| 4.     | Frederick Law Olmstead's Plan for Tacoma: 1873 . . . . .                       | 29   |
| 5.     | Colonel Isaac Smith's Plan for Tacoma: 1874 . . . . .                          | 30   |
| 6.     | Map of Commencement Bay and City of Tacoma: 1877 . . . . .                     | 33   |
| 7.     | Major Industrial Sites: 1889 . . . . .                                         | 37   |
| 8.     | Points of Interest: Chapter IV . . . . .                                       | 41   |
| 9.     | Points of Interest: Chapter V . . . . .                                        | 55   |
| 10.    | Strip Zoning South of the CBD: 1945 . . . . .                                  | 59   |
| 11.    | Strip Zoning West of the CBD: 1945 . . . . .                                   | 60   |
| 12.    | Proposed City Center Plan: 1944 . . . . .                                      | 66   |
| 13.    | Proposed Tideflats Development: 1944 . . . . .                                 | 67   |
| 14.    | Proposed Arterial System: 1944 . . . . .                                       | 68   |
| 15.    | Points of Interest: Chapter VI . . . . .                                       | 70   |
| 16.    | Distribution of Population: 1960, Pierce County<br>Metropolitan Area . . . . . | 73   |
| 17.    | Existing Land Use: 1957 . . . . .                                              | 77   |
| 18.    | Generalized Land Use Plan: 1960 . . . . .                                      | 78   |
| 19.    | Points of Interest: Chapter VII . . . . .                                      | 80   |
| 20.    | CBD Land Ownership Patterns - Absentee and Site Size: 1964                     | 86   |
| 21.    | Growth of Tacoma by Annexation . . . . .                                       | 87   |
| 22.    | Population Trends, Tacoma and Pierce County: 1880-1965 . .                     | 88   |



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author is greatly indebted to Dr. Arthur L. Grey, Jr., Professor of Urban Planning, University of Washington, for his helpful advice and encouragement as thesis chairman.

A further debt is owed to Mr. Russell Buehler and others of the staff of the City of Tacoma Planning Department for their cooperation and help.



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The cities and towns on Puget Sound have had varied and colorful periods of growth and development. This paper is a study of one of these cities and it attempts to point out some of the driving forces which caused Tacoma, Washington, the case study city, to develop the way it did.

Tacoma was first laid out on the steep bluffs overlooking Commencement Bay less than one hundred years ago. The original settlement of less than 100 persons has become the second city of size and importance on Puget Sound. It now has over 150,000 persons and it covers an area of over 52 square miles.

Its relatively short history has been marked by both booms and depressions. In the latter part of the 19th Century and even in the early part of the 20th Century it was competing with Seattle to become the major city on Puget Sound. Although Tacoma nearly equalled Seattle in population at the 1890 Census, it has never had a greater population than Seattle. Actually, Tacoma has declined in its percentage share of the regional population since the turn of the Century. Some early speculators, however, saw Tacoma as the New York of the Pacific Coast and called it "The City of Destiny".

There have been many colorful highlights in the history of Tacoma and a few of them will be reviewed in this paper. Among the highlights covered in this paper are the much criticized and unaccepted Olmsted Plan, the mediocre Smith Plan which was to become the basis for the present city street layout, the arrival of the first transcontinental railroad on the



Sound and the land boom of the 1880's.

In writing this paper a review of literature was made to obtain a general background in urban location and growth theories. A comparison is made between the actual development in Tacoma and the propounded theories in the concluding chapter. All other chapters have been arranged chronologically and at the end of each chapter a map is used to show graphically the points of interest discussed in the chapter.



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON URBAN STRUCTURE

#### The Community

A community is said to exist when interaction between individuals has the purpose of meeting individual needs and obtaining goals for the group. The city then is a related collection of primary groups such as the family which is common to all communities and purposive associations which are especially characteristic of city life.<sup>1</sup> Particular structures within these social systems are called institutions and these become basic features of a community. The features of social interaction, structures for the gratification of physical, social and psychological needs in addition to a limited geographical area are basic to a definition of the community.<sup>2</sup>

One historian has said the classical city had a well integrated social organization in which there was a sharp differentiation between the culture of the city and of the country.<sup>3</sup> It would be worthwhile at this point to review the growth of the urban areas in America and by so doing contrast the ultimate structures of cities, such as Los Angeles which cannot be called a city in the classical sense, with this idea of the classical city.

The American city was never burdened with the cumbersome heritage of

---

<sup>1</sup>Lewis Mumford, The Culture of Cities (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1938), p. 480.

<sup>2</sup>Marvin B. Sussman, Community Structure and Analysis, (New York: Crowell, 1959), pp. 1-2.

<sup>3</sup>Oscar Handlin and John Burchard (eds.), The Historian and the City (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1963), pp. 142-143.



feudal times. The reason for founding most American cities was generally economic. American cities are, and always have been, concentrations of business activities. None was built primarily for defense against attack although there were some early forts which also served as trading posts.<sup>4</sup>

The growth of cities in the U.S. has transformed within a relatively short span of time following the Civil War a predominantly rural society to one that is generally regarded as the most urban. When the urban growth and development of this country is compared with that of other world regions one can see that the change has been phenomenal, if not unprecedented, in the history of man.

#### Theories of Urbanism

McKenzie, for some periods in the process of American urbanization remarked, "During this period of population dispersion the city was for the most part the child and servant of expanding rural settlement".<sup>5</sup>

There is no general rule which determines the location of urban settlements. The reasons for selecting a site differ with the function of the city. Sometimes the special qualities of the site are decisive. Often the relationship of a site to the surrounding region is a determining force.<sup>6</sup>

We know trade and production produce concentrations of men into cities. A number of theories have been developed that attempt to explain these concentrations.

Location theories include:

---

<sup>4</sup> Egon E. Bergel, Urban Sociology (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company Inc., 1955), pp. 27-28.

<sup>5</sup> Roderick McKenzie, The Metropolitan Community (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1955), p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Bergel, op. cit., p. 74.



A. "Central-place-theory" -- The city is here conceived as being a central place within a rural area. There has been some discussion as to the validity of this theory. Edward Ullman has said, "The central place theory probably provides as valid an interpretation of settlement distribution over the land as the concentric-zone theory does for land use within the cities".<sup>7</sup>

He admits the vulnerability of the scheme for larger places, however.<sup>8</sup>

B. "Break-in-transportation theory" -- Cooley made this theory famous. He felt that a break in transportation, even if it involves no more than a transfer of goods from one carrier to another, involves much equipment and many facilities. Therefore, city formations appear at the mouths of key points of rivers, on harbors or bays, meeting points on hills and plains and other such areas.<sup>9</sup>

C. "Access-to-raw-materials theory" -- Ullman has said, "A specialized city or group of cities performing a specialized function for a large area may develop at a highly localized resource." This theory would apply to cities such raw materials as timber, mineral and agricultural products. It could also apply to a resort city.<sup>10</sup>

#### Theories of Urban Structure and Land Use Patterns

Other theories have been developed which attempt to explain observed

---

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 63 citing Edward L. Ullman, "The Theory of Location of Cities", American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 46, 1941.

<sup>8</sup>Bergel, op. cit., pp. 64-65.

<sup>9</sup>Charles H. Cooley, Sociological Research and Sociological Theory (New York: H. Holt and Company, 1930), pp. 75-83.

<sup>10</sup>Harold M. Mayer and Clyde F. Kohn, (eds.), Readings in Urban Geography, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1959), pp. 277-286.



regularities, or patterns, in the spatial distribution of people, services, and facilities in the modern metropolis. Some of these include:

A. "The concentric-ring theory"<sup>11</sup> -- The growth of the city was treated by Burgess in terms of its physical expansion and differentiation in space. The expansion of the city, he thought, tends to take the form of the development of a series of concentric rings representing successive zones of urban extension. If nothing else interferes, a town or city expands radially from its central business district, which is the first zone. Encircling the downtown area there is normally an area in transition, which is being invaded by business and light manufacturing. A third area is inhabited by the workers in industries who have escaped from the areas of deterioration but who like to live near their work. This area is likely to become the next slum. The "Residential area" comes next with its high-class apartments or single family homes. The last zone is the commuters zone, which are the suburban areas or satellite cities, a thirty to sixty minute ride from the central business district.

The exposition that Burgess has given of the theory has been almost entirely on the descriptive level. Therefore, evaluation of it must be in terms of empirical data.<sup>12</sup>

B. "Sector theory" -- Another pattern which describes the spatial

---

<sup>11</sup> Bergel, *op. cit.*, pp. 101-102; Homer Hoyt, The Structure and Growth of Residential Neighborhoods in American Cities, Federal Housing Administration (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1939), p. 17; and Robert E. Park, Ernest W. Burgess, and Roderick D. McKenzie, The City (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1925), pp. 50-52.

<sup>12</sup> Walter Firey, Land Use in Central Boston (Cambridge; Mass: Harvard University Press, 1947), pp. 7-8.



organization of the city is one which was formulated by Homer Hoyt,<sup>13</sup> a dozen years after Burgess published his concentric zone theory.

The sector theory was not intended as a rejection or replacement of the concentric zone theory but rather it was a modification in which the city is thought of as being composed of sectors rather than concentric zones. Hoyt's theory was more dynamic than was Burgess' theory since constant changes, population movements, expansion of industries and their effects on spatial patterns were studied.

It attempts to explain not only the original location of population areas, but also the shape of their growth and their later whereabouts as the city grows.

Hoyt's theory was based primarily on a rather empiricistic point of view. He used rent data and felt that as a city grows, land close to the center increased in value. His main disagreements with the concentric zone theory were:

1. Industrial areas do not develop near the downtown area, but rather along main transportation breaks on routes or near the outskirts of the city.
2. High-class areas are not located in the last concentric zone but rather in one or more sectors moving from the center as the city grows in a triangular shaped pattern.
3. High-grade residential areas originate near the downtown area but tend to proceed along lines of travel or toward such things as a lake, bay, river, high ground and so forth.

---

<sup>13</sup>Bergel, op. cit., pp. 103-104; Arthur M. Weimer, and Homer Hoyt, Principles of Real Estate, (Fourth edition, New York: Ronald Press, 1960), pp. 351-354.



4. The high-priced residential neighborhoods tend to grow toward the homes of the community leaders.

Much of the same determinism is found in the sector theory that characterizes the concentric zone hypothesis, however. Neither the concentric theory nor the sector theory is of recent origin and both represent variations upon older concentric or radial conceptions of city growth. Some of the classical political theorists such as Plato and Aristotle provided definite concentric circles for each of the major urban functions. Agricultural economists, beginning with Muller and extending through Von Thunen, have formulated concentric patterns that correspond to the types of agricultural production surrounding the market place. Firey feels the Burgess-Hoyt theories are substantially a restatement of these older ideas, written in more strictly ecological terms.<sup>14</sup> Hoyt, re-examined his Sector Theory in 1964 and concluded that although it should be more flexible it was basically correct.<sup>15</sup>

- C. "Multiple-nuclei patterns"<sup>16</sup>-- The multiple nuclei theory presents another approach concerning the spatial organization of the city. According to this theory, several areas of commercial and industrial

---

<sup>14</sup>Firey, op. cit., pp. 8-9.

<sup>15</sup>Homer Hoyt, "Recent Distortions of the Classical Models of Urban Structure", Land Economics, Vol. XL, No. 2: 208-212, May, 1964.

<sup>16</sup>Chauncy D. Harris, and Edward L. Ullman, "The Nature of Cities", Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 242: 12, November, 1945; and James A. Quinn, Urban Sociology (New York, American Book Company, 1955), p. 116.



dominance occur within the city, and one cannot understand the residential areas of the city apart from the influence of these dominant centers. This theory was developed by Harris and Ullman. They felt commercial, industrial, and retail nuclei developed in many American cities as the growth of the cities promoted specialization and decentralization. Most of these cities have many major and minor nuclei scattered throughout. The rise of these different subcenters reflects a combination of the following factors:

1. Certain activities require specialized facilities.
2. Certain like activities group together because they profit from being near each other.
3. Certain unlike activities are detrimental to each other's development.

The multiple nuclei theory is not as useful in discovering universal spatial patterns than it is in describing the unique patterns and variations found in every community, and in explaining their origin and development.

- D. "The theory of natural areas"<sup>17</sup>-- Several authors, including Zorbaugh, have stressed the concept of "natural" areas. This term refers to human nature rather than to natural settings of urban settlements. This theory is actually a restatement of concentration and segregation since it assumes people of the same racial, religious, national, or cultural group have a tendency to live in the same area. Little research has been done on the problem of inter-relations between

---

<sup>17</sup>Ernest W. Burgess (ed.), The Urban Community (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1927), pp. 219-229.



particular groups and particular areas thus far, therefore it can only be effectively used to supplement other hypotheses.

- E. "Theory of symbolic values"<sup>18</sup>-- Firey felt there are certain ecological processes which cannot be embraced in a strictly economic analysis. His hypothesis suggests an alteration to some of the basic premises of ecology. In his Boston study he found a "symbol-sentiment relationship" between groups and areas. This explains in part at least why some people persist in retaining their living quarters despite adverse conditions since they may ascribe intangible, non-material values to locations.

#### Changes in the Urban Structure

Implications of urban growth or decline in the United States are many and only a few are cited below.

An expanding business district causes people to leave the hitherto well-organized residential areas which are being encroached upon by the business activities. Residential land values immediately adjacent to the new business section begin to decline, and if business deserts some areas, the values do not rise, since the relinquished blocks are not attractive for residences. In a similar manner, population growth and decline alter the spatial features of a city. As a general rule, most urban areas in the United States have experienced tremendous growth in population over the past hundred years. Residential areas have become overcrowded; land values, taxes and rents have risen; but people have continued to move in. At first there was a concentration and centralization of residential

---

<sup>18</sup>Bergel, op. cit., p. 106, citing American Sociological Review, Vol. 10, April, 1945.



sections. But as "gray areas" of obsolescent housing increased, this process in most cities was changed to and accompanied by residential decentralization.<sup>19</sup> Three socio-economic groups have helped this new development along.

1. Upper classes - built sections of spacious homes on large lots.
2. Middle class - could not find adequate accommodations in the already densely populated districts so built medium density residential areas on the urban fringe.
3. Lower classes - moved to hastily erected shabbily built houses.

Apartments also were erected in some of the older areas to replace either partially or wholly the single-family dwelling. Normally the city first grows by building on vacant lots, but since many of them are scattered and do not permit systematic development, the population surplus spills over and suburbs are created. As the city grows, the rich people move farther from the center. Fashionable suburbs become middle-class areas and the upper classes build on new, undeveloped land.<sup>20</sup>

The shift in new construction to the single family house which began in the 1930's can be traced to a number of forces such as the influence of the federal programs in the home financing field, rising levels of personal income and the automobile. The development of the shopping center has been associated with outward migration of people. Accompanying the decentralization of residential and commercial areas has been the

---

<sup>19</sup>Bernard J. Frieden, The Future of Old Neighborhoods (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1964), p. 2.

<sup>20</sup>Bergel, op. cit., pp. 92-94.



similar development in manufacturing. Reasons cited for industrial decentralization include availability of sites of suitable size, lower land prices, lower local taxes, zoning and other regulations and more labor.<sup>21</sup>

The following chapters review the location, growth, and changing urban structure of Tacoma and the literature just reviewed will serve as a foundation upon which a portion of the concluding chapter will be based.

---

<sup>21</sup> Arthur L. Grey Jr., "Los Angeles: Urban Prototype", Land Economics, Vol. XXXV, No. 3: 234-239, August 1959.



### CHAPTER III

#### HISTORY OF LAND SETTLEMENT IN TACOMA: EARLY PERIOD 1792-1873

##### Exploration

The site where Tacoma is now built was discovered by Captain George Vancouver, of the British Navy, in May 1792. During his exploration of the area he named much of the Puget Sound region including Mount Rainier, which he designated after an admiral in the British Navy.<sup>1</sup>

In 1841, two United States Navy vessels under the command of Lieutenant Charles Wilkes sailed into Puget Sound on an exploratory expedition. They proceeded to the Hudson Bay Company post at Fort Nisqually, which at that time was the only white settlement in the region. After spending a few days at Fort Nisqually, the expedition set out to chart the waters of Puget Sound. One of the ships, under Lieutenant Cadwalader Ringgold, was assigned the eastern shore of the Sound beginning at Point Defiance and proceeding north. The bay near Point Defiance was called Commencement because it was the starting point for Lieutenant Ringgold's surveys. The expedition found the waters of the area very deep even near the shore. As Wilkes reported..."The shores of all these inlets and bays are remarkably bold - so much so that in many places a ship's side would strike the shore before the keel would touch the ground".<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Tacoma. City Planning Commission, Site-History-Population; A part of the Tacoma Master Plan. (Tacoma, 1948), p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., and Thomas W. Prosch, McCarver and Tacoma (Seattle: Lowman and Hanford Stationery and Printing Company, 1906) pp. 146-147.



In 1853, Theodore Winthrop came to the Puget Sound from the East Coast and explored the region surrounding it. After he returned to the East Coast he wrote the book Canoe and Saddle, which later played an important part in the history of Tacoma.<sup>3</sup>

#### Early Settlers in the Area

The first white settlers in the area were the employees of the Hudson Bay Company which established Fort Nisqually to keep a British party on Puget Sound at all times. It was located on the Nisqually Trail between Puget Sound and Fort Vancouver. Joint occupancy treaties with England were in effect at that time and the post was surrounded by the claims of the Puget Sound Agricultural Company, which was a subsidiary of the Hudson Bay Company. The area was carefully guarded from overpopulation since the Hudson Bay Company sold goods to the settlers at high prices and paid very low prices for the goods produced by the settlers.<sup>4</sup> The United States government gained control over Fort Nisqually in 1846 and in 1867 it bought the fort for \$325,000, thereby severing the last British ties with the Fort.<sup>5</sup>

The death of one of the settlers during an Indian attack resulted in the construction of Fort Steilacoom, which was begun in August 1849 on 20 acres of land rented from the Hudson Bay Company. Steilacoom was the

---

<sup>3</sup> Tacoma. City Planning Commission, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Glenn C. Quiett, They Built the West (New York, London: D. Appleton-Century Company Incorporated, 1934) p. 400; and Gertrude L. McKean, "Industrial Tacoma" (unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Washington, Seattle, 1940) p. 6.

<sup>5</sup> Taken from a caption on a Washington State Historical Museum display.



metropolis of Puget Sound when settlers first began as a trading center and place of refuge for these early Tacoma residents.<sup>6</sup>

#### Early Settlers on Commencement Bay

The first settler on the site of the City of Tacoma was a Swede named Nicholas DeLin, who arrived in 1852. He built a small sawmill on the south shore of Commencement Bay at what is now the corner of Puyallup Avenue and Winthrop Avenue. The mill was powered by water from a dam which DeLin built across two nearby streams. Logs were cut by hand from the hills surrounding the mill and were dragged to the mill by an ox team. The first shipment of lumber was made in 1853 to San Francisco.

The Peter Judson family came over the Naches Pass and settled on Commencement Bay in 1853. They took a 321 acre claim fronting on the Bay and encompassing the site upon which the Tacoma Central Business District is now located. The family planted oats and wheat on the flat land overlooking the bay between what are now South Seventh and South Seventeenth Streets.<sup>7</sup>

The area grew slowly at first and its industrial activities were based on raw materials from the immediate vicinity. DeLin's mill provided work for other families when they were not occupied with working their own claims.

---

<sup>6</sup>Tacoma. City Planning Commission, loc. cit., and Hans Bergman, History of Scandinavians in Tacoma and Pierce County (Tacoma, Wash., H. Bergman, 1926) p. 7.

<sup>7</sup>Tacoma. City Planning Commission, loc. cit.; Bergman, op. cit.; pp. 9-20; and McKean, loc. cit.



The few settlers abandoned their log cabin homes in October 1855, due to the Indian war which was going on west of the Cascades. A threatened Indian massacre caused the settlers to take refuge at Fort Steilacoom for a time since there was no fort for protection at the small settlement. The struggle ended in the early part of 1856 and in 1857 a reservation of 18,000 acres was set aside for the Indians. Part of the city of Tacoma has been extended into a portion of what was the Puyallup Indian Reservation.<sup>8</sup>

DeLin and his family returned to resume operations at his mill in 1857 and he operated the mill until 1861 when he sold his claim to John L. Perkins. He then moved his family to Olympia and from there to Portland where he later met Morton Mathew McCarver.

In 1864 Job Carr sought to find a site which might become the western terminus of the Northern Transcontinental Railways. After he sounded the bay and discovered that it was deep enough for ocean going vessels, he took a claim north of the Peter Judson claim. Job Carr's claim included the site of "Old Town".<sup>9</sup>

#### McCarver and "Old Town"

General Morton Mathew McCarver, who helped plat Burlington, Iowa and Sacramento, California, gained his title as Quartermaster General when he was in Iowa. He came to the south shore of Commencement Bay in 1868 looking for a new townsite. He had met Nicholas DeLin in Portland

---

<sup>8</sup>Prosch, op. cit., pp. 148-150.

<sup>9</sup>Quiett, op. cit., pp. 400-401.



and DeLin told him of the fine townsite at the head of Commencement Bay. When he came to look at the site he was impressed with the potentialities of it, especially the deep harbor and nearby timber. He also saw it as a possible site for the terminus of a trans-continental railroad. McCarver bought the Carr claim and settled in Old Woman's Gulch, where the stadium now stands. He arranged with the First National Bank in Portland to help him promote his new town.<sup>10</sup> A map of the claims in 1868 can be seen on Figure 1.

About that same time, Mr. Hadlock and Mr. Ackerson, two of five men from California who were interested in building a mill on Puget Sound, were on an inspection tour of the area. They were to select a site for a mill. General McCarver heard of their trip, met them in Steilacoom and brought them to what later became Old Tacoma. The men were pleased with the site and purchased 85 acres of land for \$700. When the mill was constructed it was named for two of the partners and became known as Hanson, Ackerson and Company. The construction and growth of the mill caused a small-scale boom at the little community.

On April 22, 1868, Fort Steilacoom was abandoned and Brigadier General W. S. Harney, commanding the Department of Oregon recommended that Point Defiance be made the site of a new fort. The Federal Government acquired 638 acres of the Point to be used as a military reservation, but it was never used as a fort.<sup>11</sup>

In August, 1868, McCarver employed Charles A. White, an Olympia civil engineer to survey and plat a portion of his land. Prior to this

---

<sup>10</sup>Tacoma. City Planning Commission, op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>11</sup>Presch, op. cit., pp. 149-151.



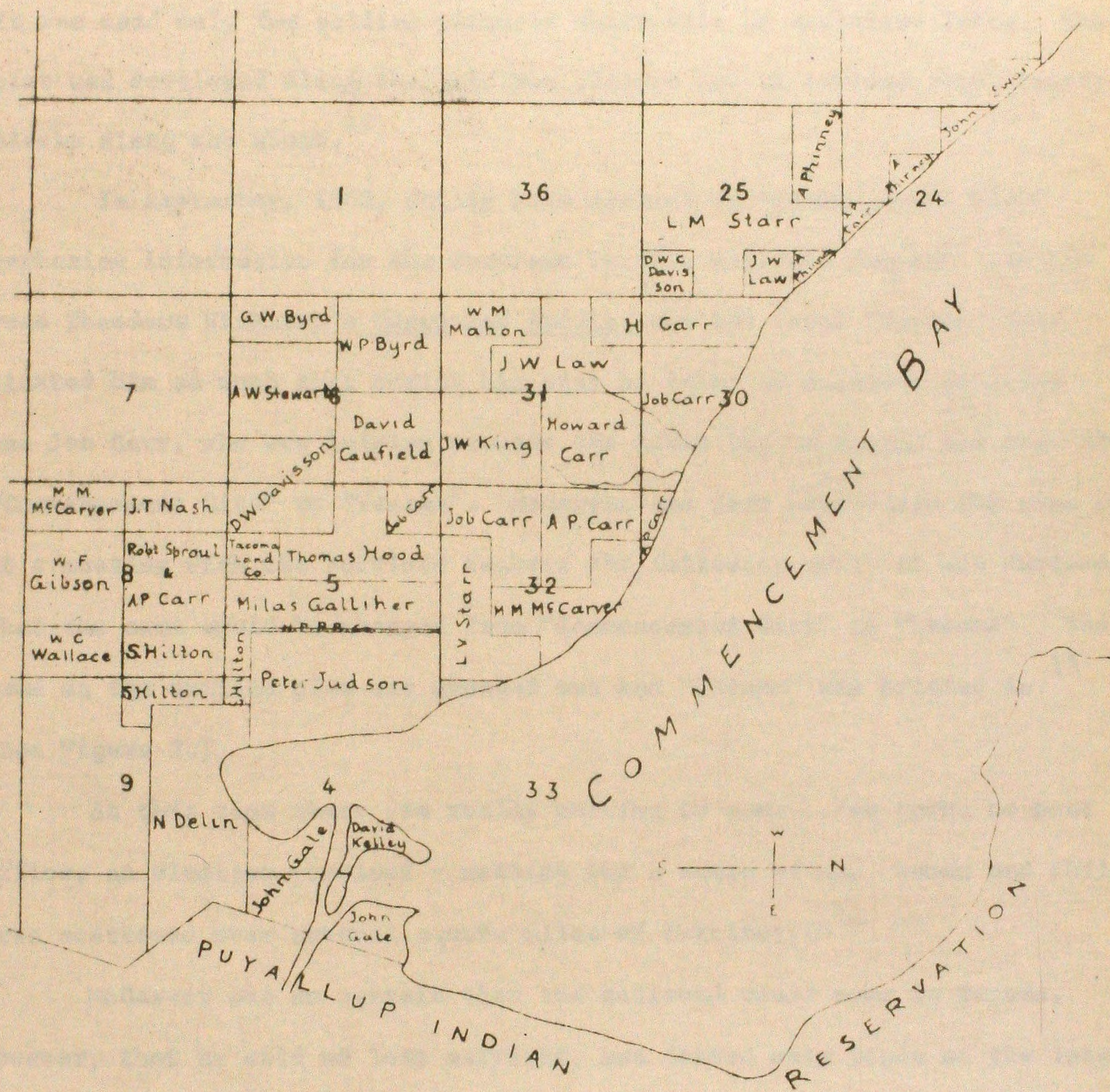


Figure 1

TACOMA HARBOR IN 1868. MAP OF LAND CLAIMS, TACOMA TOWNSITE.

Source: McCarver and Tacoma



time the area had been called "Chebaulip" by the Indians, but McCarver had "Commencement City" printed on the plat. The town was never known officially as "Commencement City", however, as the plat was not filed. It was used only for selling purposes which will be explained later. The plat was developed along the gridiron pattern and it covered about twenty blocks along the shore.<sup>12</sup>

In September, 1868, Philip Ritz arrived in "Commencement City" gathering information for the Northern Pacific Railroad Company. He had read Theodore Winthrop's Canoe and Saddle, and had found "Tacoma" fascinated him so much that during his stay he tried to persuade McCarver and Job Carr, who was helping promote the townsite, to change the name of "Commencement City" to "Tacoma". McCarver and Carr considered the name and at a meeting with the Portland bankers the following month it was decided that the name would be changed from "Commencement City" to "Tacoma". The name on the unfiled plat was crossed out and "Tacoma" was printed in.<sup>13</sup>

(See Figure 2.)

At this time there was really nothing to name..."no town, no post office, no election precinct - nothing but a score of men, women and children scattered over several square miles of territory."<sup>14</sup>

McCarver was so certain that the railroad would come to Tacoma, however, that he sold no lots outright, but issued only bonds on the lots shown in Figure 1. The bonds called for deeds at a later date providing

---

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp. 165-166.

<sup>13</sup>Edmond S. Meany, Three Cities of Washington, Origin of Their Names (Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1923) pp. 6-7.

<sup>14</sup>Prosche, op. cit., p. 163.



## MAP

OF

COMMENCEMENT CITY W.I.

TACOMA

W.

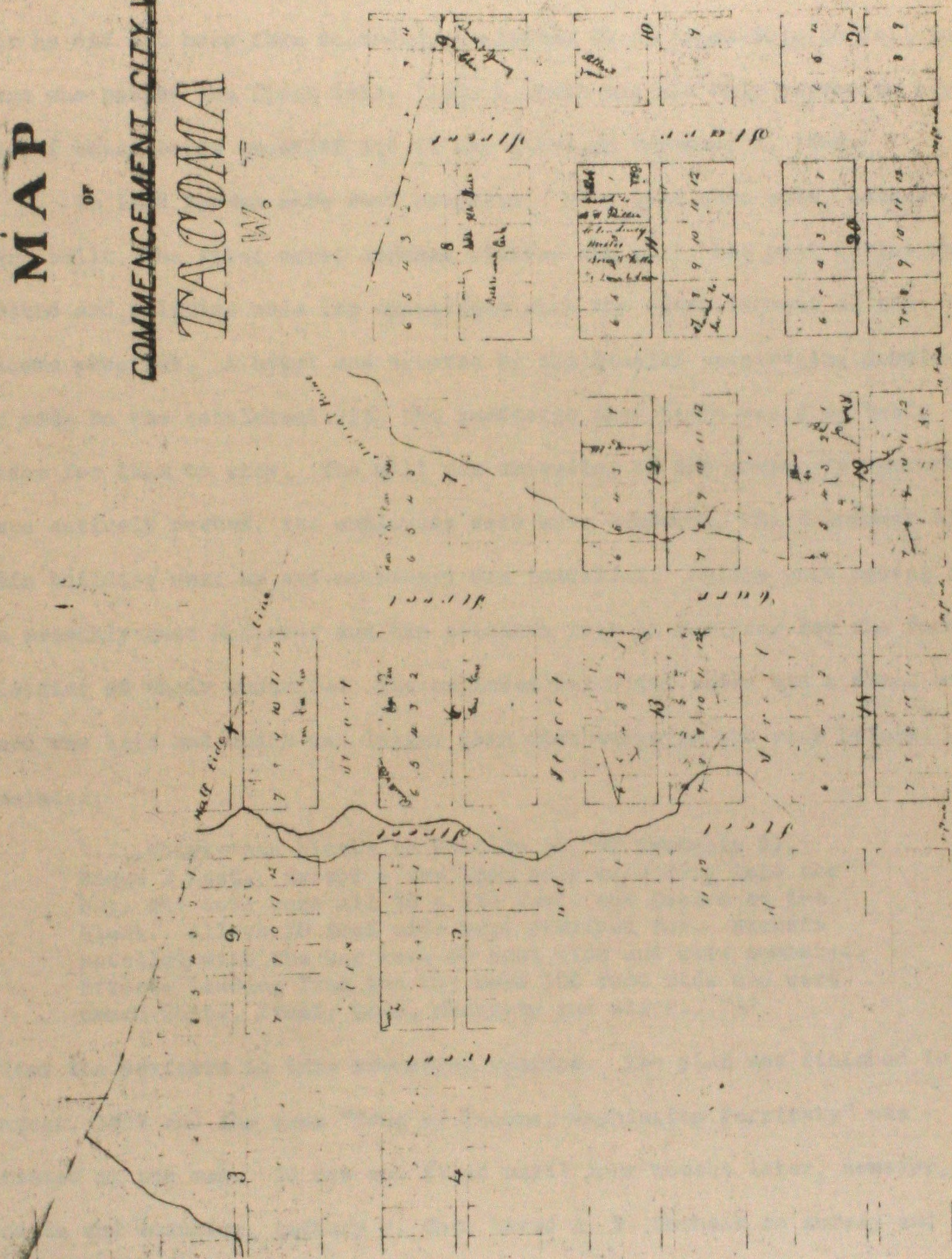


Figure 2

GENERAL McCARVER'S PLAT OF TACOMA IN 1868.

Source: Tacoma City Planning Department



that if the railroad came within five years the price of the lots would be tripled. It is believed the first lots were purchased by H. Steele, but he did not have them recorded, therefore it is impossible to tell for sure who bought the first lots. John T. Nash was the only person to have one of these bonds recorded and it was filed on December 2, 1868.

In 1869 Tacoma made real progress. Many lots were sold, houses were built, the first ocean steamer visited the port, the post office was opened and politics made its appearance with the establishment of the Tacoma precinct. A hotel was erected by the Steeles encouraging people to come to the settlement with the knowledge that there was a suitable place for them to stay. The mill was expanding as the company's operations were actively pushed, its employees were more numerous, the framework of its main building went up and machinery was installed. Things were moving along so smoothly that McCarver and his partners felt it was time for the formal platting of their townsite. The engineer was hired again and a tract of land was laid out which was larger than that surveyed the year before. It included:

"....thirty-one blocks in Section 30, of township 21, Range 3 East. Except a few long ones extending into the bay, the lots were all 50 x 120 feet, and twelve to the block. Alleys 20 feet wide were provided for. Streets parallel with the bay were 80 feet wide and were numbered. Streets leading from the bay were 100 feet wide and were named White, Steel, Carr, McCarver and Starr..."<sup>15</sup>

after the partners in this promotion venture. The plat was finished in August, 1869 and the name "Town of Tacoma, Washington Territory" was printed on the map. It was not filed until four months later, however, and in the meantime, Anthony P. Carr hired A. W. Unthank to survey and plat a small tract of land he had. It was mapped into eighteen lots,

---

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.



four blocks and two streets and in November, 1869, Carr filed it with the County Auditor as the town of Tacoma. This can be seen on Figure 5 in the next chapter. He claimed he feared the attempted establishment of another town of Tacoma near Point Defiance by hostile interests and he wanted to head them off. Since one "Town of Tacoma" was already filed, it prevented McCarver from filing another so he changed the name of his plat to "Tacoma City", and filed it as such in December, 1869. Other plats followed, the first being William P. Byrd's "Addition to Tacoma City", in January, 1870. Byrd was the first person to use the word avenue on a Tacoma plat.<sup>16</sup>

Probably the most important single event in 1869 for Tacoma was when the officers of the Northern Pacific Railroad let a contract to Jay Cooke and Company for the sale of securities to raise money to finance its transcontinental railroad. The Northern Pacific's charter called for a railroad to be built from the Great Lakes to Puget Sound and other provisions of the charter stated that a telegraph line be built at the same time and other railroads would be permitted to connect with the line.<sup>17</sup> This started the active speculation as to where the terminus would be. Port Townsend, Whidbey Island, Bellingham Bay, Port Susan, Mukilteo, Seattle, Tacoma, Stilacoom, Nisqually and Olympia were all possibilities for the terminus and some of the towns offered the railroad company land and money as inducements. Tacoma made its offer through McCarver. He offered a vast acreage with unbroken waterfront and in July, 1873 commissioners from the company made examination of the different places to

---

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., pp. 163-173.

<sup>17</sup> Tacoma. City Planning Commission, loc. cit.



determine the Puget Sound terminal point for the railroad. Everything considered, they decided that the Puget Sound terminus of the main line of the Northern Pacific Railroad be established on the south side of Commencement Bay. The commissioners sent the following telegram to Tacoma to announce their decision:

"To General M. M. McCarver, Tacoma City:

We have located the terminus on Commencement Bay.

R. D. Rice  
John C. Ainsworth  
Commissioners."

A celebration was held in Tacoma, then it was found that the site chosen by the railroad was located about three miles from the existing town. On September 10, 1873, the Board of Directors of the Company, by formal resolution, approved the action of the Commissioners in locating the terminus, as follows:

"Resolved, that the N.P.R.R. Company locate and construct its main road to a point on Puget Sound on the southerly side of Commencement Bay, in Township 21 North, Range 3 East of Willamette Meridian, and within the limits of the city of Tacoma, which point in said city of Tacoma is declared to be the western terminus of the main line of the Northern Pacific Railroad."<sup>18</sup>

The early settlement, now called Old Tacoma, had been built on the peninsula at a point where the coastal plain was only about 300 feet wide. This was inadequate for the railroad, which needed a large amount of space for its station and yards and the railroad made its choice for the location of the terminus in the broad lowland about three miles to the south.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup>Prosch, op. cit., pp. 178-179; and Bergman, op. cit., pp. 21-22.

<sup>19</sup>McKean, op. cit., p. 8.



About this time the Northern Pacific turned over, to the Lake Superior and Puget Sound Land Company (the Tacoma Land Company), the land McCarver and his partners had bought for the railroad. McCarver and his partners consequently felt they had been betrayed. As it was, McCarver and his partners, profited very little if anything, from their townsite venture. In many cases, lots they had sold on contract were reconveyed to them and they refunded the purchase money.<sup>20</sup>

There was a short boom period during August and September of 1873 in which a tent city was created in Tacoma. Some commercial enterprises were set up, homes were built and visions of vast wealth and a large population were seen by many. A financial panic in September of that year caused the bankruptcy of Jay Cooke and Co. and later the failure of the Northern Pacific itself. This meant a temporary suspension of railroad operations, delay, hard times and doubt. The rush to Tacoma stopped and in a short time more people left the town than had come to it.<sup>21</sup>

In order to recoup their losses, McCarver and others attempted to interest investors in the coal mines they had discovered in 1868. McCarver led a group of men to investigate the coal field. A short time later he caught cold, which resulted in his death on April 17, 1875.<sup>22</sup>

---

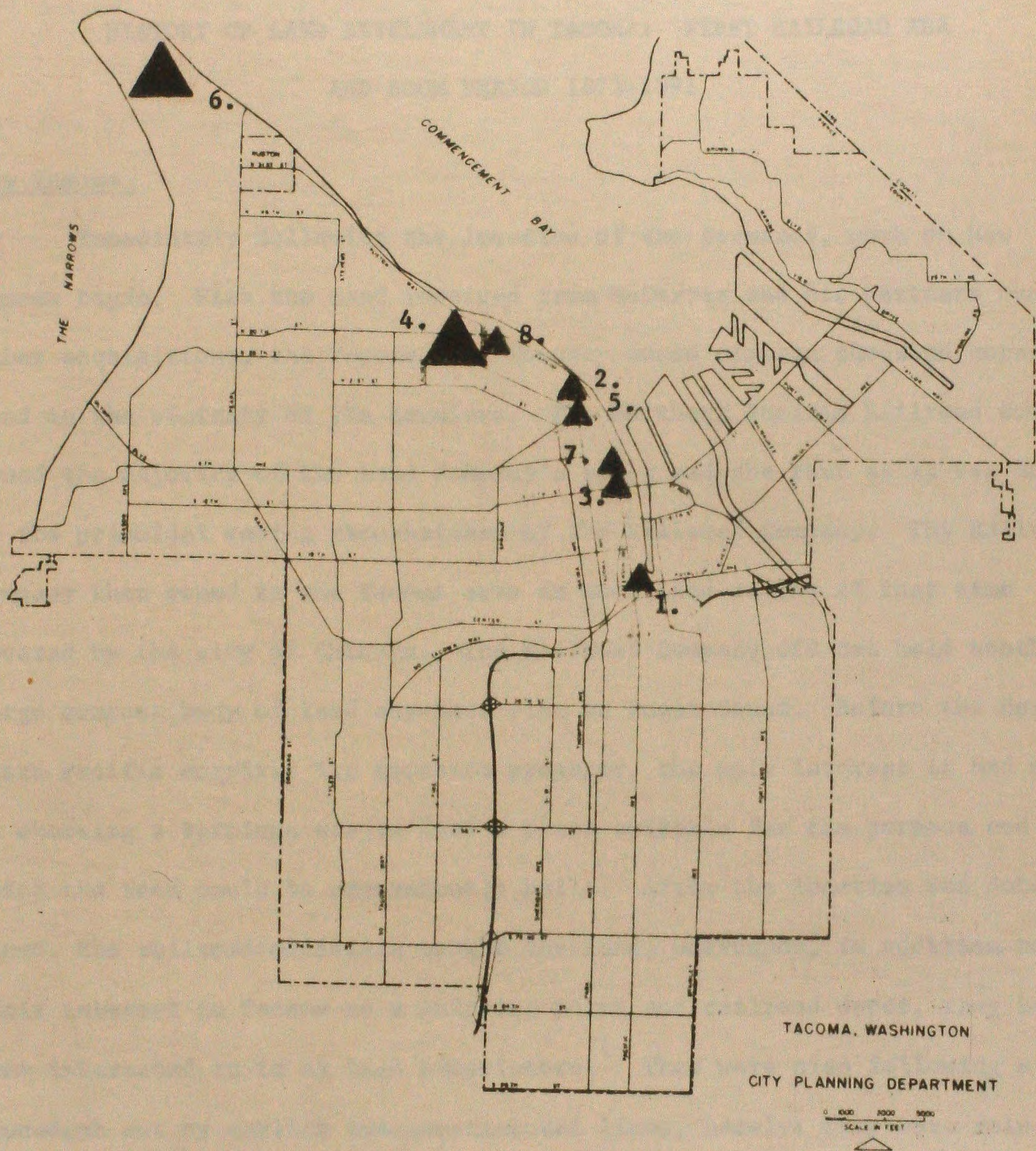
<sup>20</sup>Bergman, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>21</sup>Prosch, op. cit., pp. 179-180.

<sup>22</sup>Bergman, loc. cit.



## POINTS OF INTEREST: CHAPTER III



- |                                 |                                     |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. DeLin's Sawmill              | 5. Old Woman's Gulch                |
| 2. Hanson, Ackerson and Company | 6. Point Defiance                   |
| 3. Judson's Farm                | 7. Terminus of the Northern Pacific |
| 4. "Old Town"                   | 8. Steele Hotel                     |

Figure 3



## CHAPTER IV

### HISTORY OF LAND SETTLEMENT IN TACOMA: FIRST RAILROAD ERA AND BOOM PERIOD 1873-1891

#### New Tacoma

Immediately following the location of the terminus, work on New Tacoma began. With the land received from McCarver and his partners and other acquisitions, the Tacoma Land Company owned sixteen thousand acres of land in the vicinity of the terminus. The Northern Pacific Railroad Company owned the majority of the Land Company's stock and the rest of it was held by the principal voting stockholders of the Railroad Company. The Railroad Company then owned in the Tacoma area as much land as was at that time covered by the city of Chicago. The Railroad Company did not hold another large compact body of land anywhere else on Puget Sound. Before the Northern Pacific acquired its townsite property, the only interest it had was in choosing a terminus was to find a place suitable for the purpose and to which the road could be conveniently built. After the location was determined, the railroad officials bought the land, whereupon, in addition to their interest in Tacoma as a shipping point and railroad depot, they became interested in it as land proprietors.<sup>1</sup> They were also following a precedent set by earlier transcontinental lines, namely: They were reluctant to share the speculative land profits with persons not directly connected with the company.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Northern Pacific Railroad Company. Tacoma, the Western Terminus of the Northern Pacific Railroad, (Tacoma, 1887) pp. 4-6.

<sup>2</sup>John W. Reps, The Making of Urban America, (Princeton, New Jersey Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 410.



### Planning in New Tacoma

General James Tilton was the first engineer hired to work on the new townsite. Work was begun by the middle of August of 1873 when the townsite was burned off, killing all vegetation. A wharf was being constructed at the same time in preparation for the expected oriental trade, which never materialized. The wharf was not built close to the new town or the existing mill so for the next few years there were four separate, struggling communities, each with its own independent concerns and each antagonistic to the others. These four places soon came to be known as the Old Town, the Mill Town, the Railroad Wharf and the New Town. General Tilton was released after a few months on the job and one of the members of the committee that had selected the site, Charles B. Wright, hired Frederick Law Olmstead, the landscape architect, who had laid out Central Park in New York to plan the streets for the new townsite. People were already flocking to the new townsite to buy lots, but the town was not platted. Wright told Olmstead he wanted the plans within six weeks, for which Olmstead was to be paid \$2,000 by the Tacoma Land Company. It is not known if Olmstead worked from topographical maps or if he visited the site, but it is known that the plan which Olmstead prepared took three months. People were dissatisfied that the Land Company had delayed the sale of lots so long and many of the prospective buyers were looking for rectangles of ground which were easily described and easily found. When the Olmstead Plan reached Tacoma in late 1873, the settlers found the streets followed the contours of the land and while all lots had a frontage of 25 feet, they had varying depths and shapes. The critics ridiculed the plan saying that everything that had ever been exhibited in an agricultural show had its



counterpart in the shape of the lots in New Tacoma.<sup>3</sup> One author stated Olmstead had:

"Devised and put on paper the most fantastic and astonishing plat of a town that was ever seen. It covered a thousand acres, two miles along the front of the hilltop. Everything was curvilinear. There wasn't a straight street, a right angle or a corner lot. The blocks were shaped like melons, pears, and sweet potatoes. Some were short and others were long. One block, shaped like a banana, was 3,000 feet in length, and had 250 lots. The lots were 25 feet wide, but were all sorts of lengths, averaging 180 feet. It was a pretty fair park plan. It generally condemned itself for a town."<sup>4</sup>

The streets had exotic names such as Orinoco and Monoca, it had terraced drives and seven parks,<sup>5</sup> (as shown on Figure 4). It was doomed never to become a reality since the town builders were not satisfied with it and hired Colonel Isaac Smith to make a plan that is now the present street system. Colonel Smith said this plan was patterned after Melbourne, Australia, and it generally followed the conventional gridiron pattern rather than conform to the topography as the Olmstead Plan did. The Olmstead Plan did have some influence upon Smith, however, in that Smith's plan did attempt to lay out the main streets more or less along the contours. Tacoma and Pacific Avenues were not only to be broad, but long and as level as possible. The vast majority of the streets, however, were laid out in the middlewestern practice of crossing all streets at right angles regardless of topography. See Figure 5 for Smith's plan of Tacoma. The citizens of those days said:

---

<sup>3</sup>Herbert Hunt, Tacoma, Its History and Its Builders (Chicago: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1906) pp. 231-232; Prosch, op. cit., pp. 179-180; Reys, loc. cit.; and telephone conversation with Murray Morgan, noted author, April 29, 1965.

<sup>4</sup>Prosch, op. cit., pp. 184-185.

<sup>5</sup>Quiett, op. cit., p. 414.



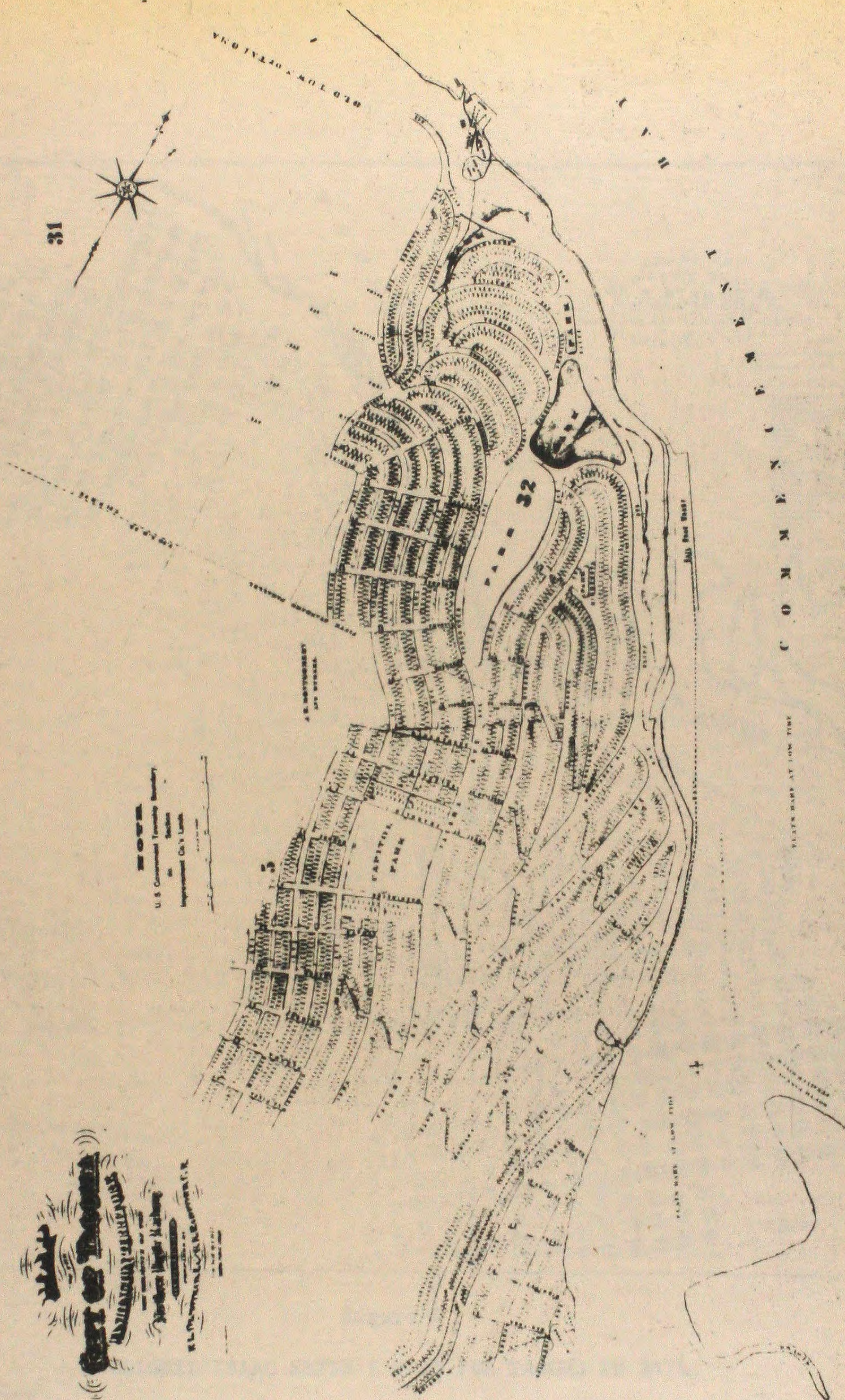
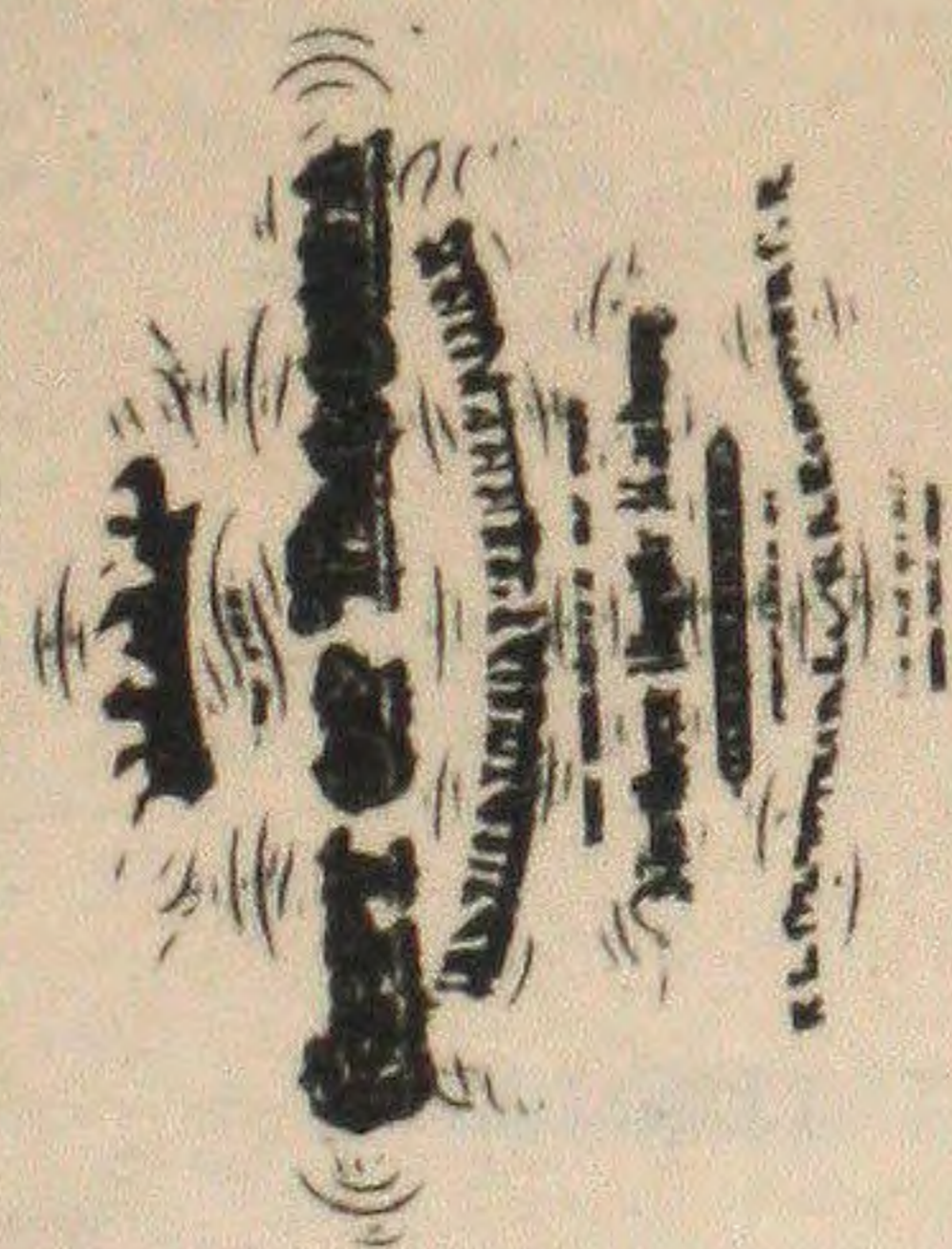


Figure 4

FREDERICK LAW OLNSTEAD'S PLAN FOR TACOMA IN 1873.

Source: The Making of Urban America



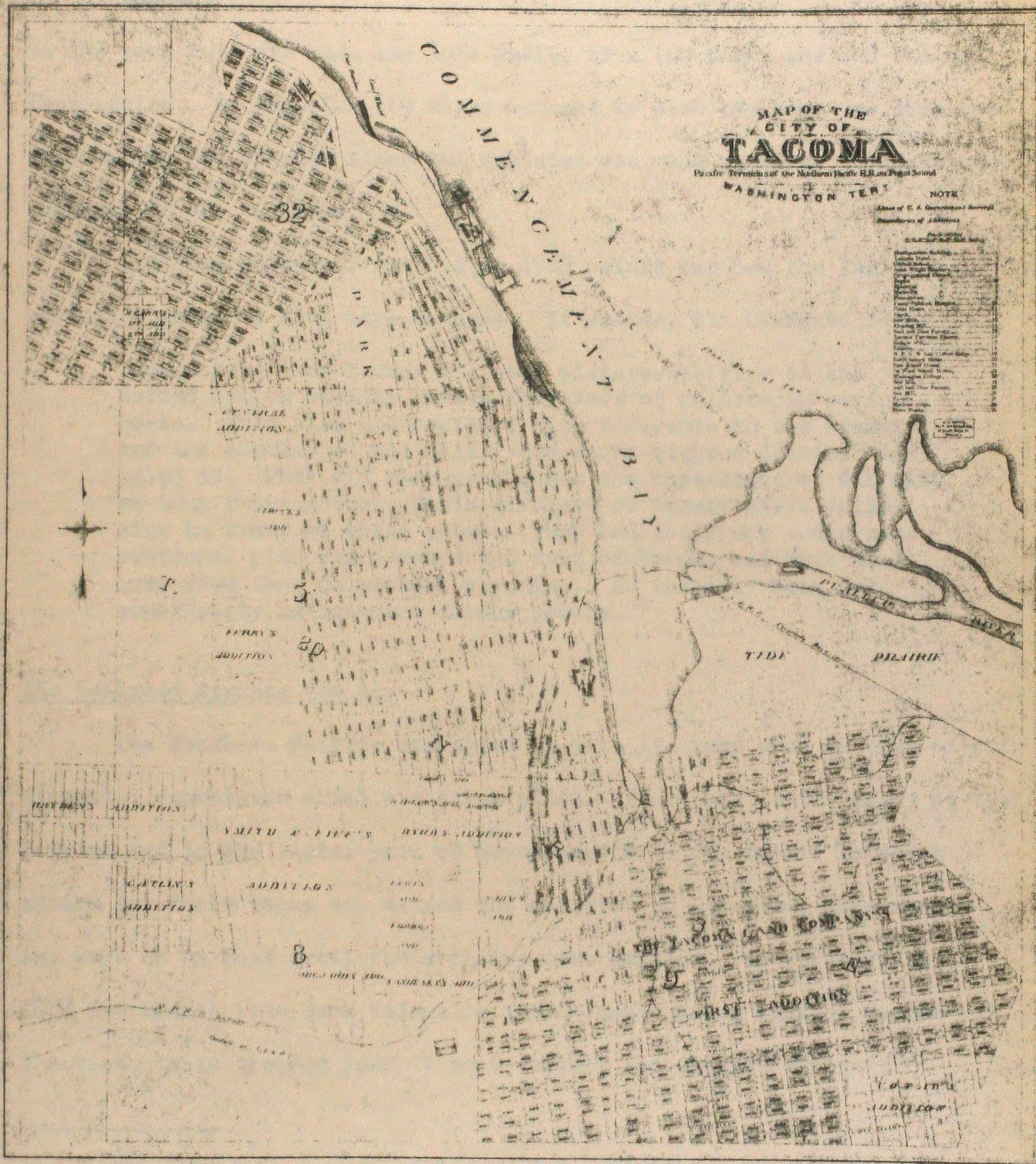


Figure 5

COLONEL ISAAC SMITH'S PLAN FOR TACOMA IN 1874



"No one could sell a crooked lot to an honest Iowa farmer. The plots must be rectangular and there must be plenty of corner lots for the prairie states people to purchase sight unseen."<sup>6</sup>

So the town builders made the lots small, 25 x 100 feet, and the blocks rectangular. By the time the third attempt to plat the town was completed nine months had elapsed since the decision was made on where to locate the terminus of the railroad.

A Tacoma newspaper article in 1965 points out how the feelings towards Olmstead's Plan have changed. It states, the Olmstead Plan:

"would have made Tacoma the most picturesque city in the United States besides saving thousands of dollars in paving costs. This plan was designed with reference to the scenery and the contour of the hills, but short-sighted critics ridiculed it. What did they care about the appearance of the city or long range gains? Their standard of beauty was a dollar sign in front of their noses. They had their way and a conventional plan was adopted for part of Tacoma and much of it grew from then on without planning. So the city lost her opportunity to become a famous beauty."<sup>7</sup>

### The Railroad Reaches the Bay

The Northern Pacific struggled on with its road even in view of the financial depression which had taken place. There was little money at its command and in the latter part of November, 1873, the unpaid laborers struck for their wages and seized the railroad at Lakeview, preventing any work to be done until their claims were settled. On December 16, 1873 the branch line from Kalama on the Columbia River reached Tacoma and the first train arrived just 24 hours before the charter expired.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup>Mayor's Research Committee on Urban Problems, Tacoma, The City We Build. (Tacoma, Tacoma City Council, 1944) pp. 36.

<sup>7</sup>Historical article in The Tacoma News Tribune and Sunday Ledger, April 11, 1965.

<sup>8</sup>Prosch, loc. cit.



### Population Growth

In November, 1873, a census was taken and at that time New Tacoma had 125 whites, about a dozen of them women and 250 Chinese who were working as coolie laborers.<sup>9</sup> New Tacoma, as it was now officially known, grew rapidly for a time. A number of people from the Old Town moved over and the operation of the railroad brought several others. The Tacoma Land Company built an office building and gave employment to more men. The first election was held in New Tacoma in January of 1874 to vote on the securing of a public school district. The New Tacoma post office was established in July, 1874.<sup>10</sup>

As if to ridicule Olmsteads' artistic plan, the raw little town struggled over its muddy streets among the fir stumps and wild berry vines. The center of life and color in this town was Whiskey Row on Pacific Avenue, famous for fist fights and boggy mud.<sup>11</sup>

In 1880 New Tacoma had 720 persons and Old Town had 383.<sup>12</sup> See Figure 6, which shows both towns about that time and the tideflats before development began.

On November 5, 1885, the Chinese population, which served as a valuable reservoir of inexpensive labor in the early development period, were driven out as undesirable.<sup>13</sup> It is interesting to note that a hold-

---

<sup>9</sup>Bergman, op. cit., p. 42.

<sup>10</sup>McKean, op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>11</sup>Quiett, op. cit., p. 414.

<sup>12</sup>Bergman, loc. cit.

<sup>13</sup>McKean, op. cit., p. 10.



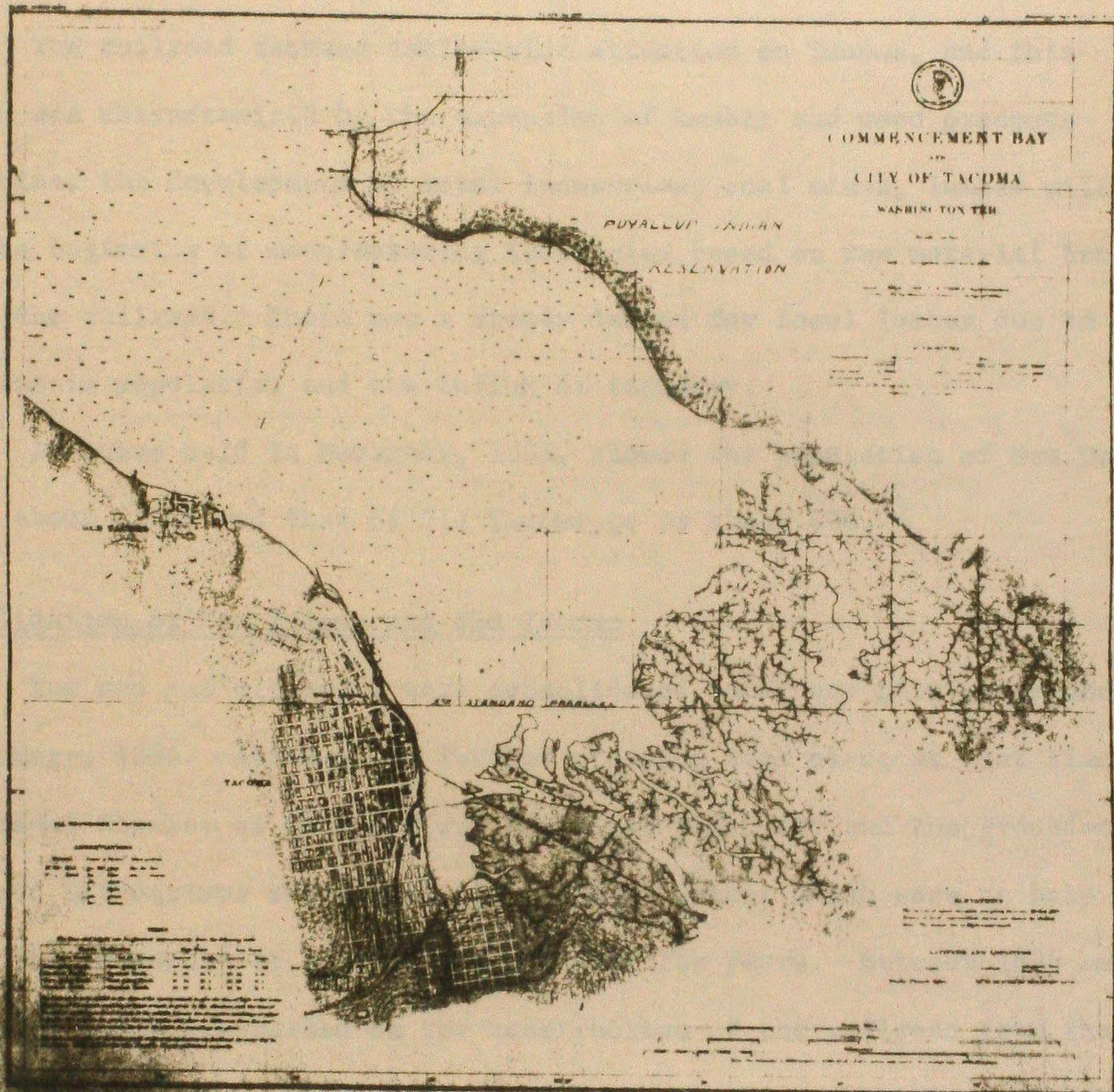


Figure 6

MAP OF COMMENCEMENT BAY AND CITY OF TACOMA IN 1877.



over from that period is still included in the present Tacoma City Charter which states that: "No person shall be eligible for employment in the city service who is not a citizen of the United States; provided that as to laborers this requirement may be waived by the Personnel Officer when laborers who are citizens are not available."<sup>14</sup>

The railroad focused nation-wide attention on Tacoma, and this period was characterized by the expansion of lumber and wood products companies, the development of metal industries, coal mines, lumber mills and the beginning of manufacturing industries based on raw material brought in by the railroad. There was a steady demand for local lumber due to the increase in population and the influx of industry.

A census held in November, 1883, showed the population of New Tacoma to be about 4,000 and that of Old Tacoma to be about 400.<sup>15</sup>

#### Consolidation of New Tacoma and Old Tacoma

The new and old towns were consolidated under one city government in January, 1884. Although no further planning took place at that time, the Tacoma Chamber of Commerce was organized that year and the groundwork was laid for various schemes of private development which were to help cause the community to boom within the next few years. Between 1884 and 1887 work again progressed on the construction of the railroad from the East to the Cascades and from Tacoma to the mountains. There were plans

---

<sup>14</sup>Tacoma. City Council, Tacoma City Charter, 1953. Section 6.3.

<sup>15</sup>Donald L. Garrity, "Tacoma, Washington: A Demographic and Ecological Analysis", (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Washington, 1952) p. 10.



for a tunnel through the Cascades, but when the tracks reached the mountains in the early part of 1887 it was decided a switchback over the mountains would be built for use until the tunnel could be completed. It took just four months to finish the switchback and the transcontinental line of the Northern Pacific over its own tracks was then completed. The railroad brought a large amount of traffic during the summer season, but business in the Puget Sound area was hard hit when heavier snows than were expected made the tracks impassable during the winter.<sup>16</sup>

#### Rapid Expansion and Speculation

A boom began in Tacoma in 1887 and by 1889 it was at its peak. The Stampede Tunnel just south of Snoqualmie Pass was bored through on May 3, 1888, and served to spur on the boom that was going on in Tacoma, since it eliminated the seasonal characteristics of the switchback. The tunnel was named "Stampede" because the foreman in charge of the trail-cutters pushed the work faster than the men wanted to go. They threw down their tools one afternoon and the foreman told the cook not to feed them because the men had struck. At this the men rolled their blankets and "stampeded" down the trail.<sup>17</sup>

The expansion of railroad service brought in an influx of settlers and wealth. It also promoted a certain amount of overexpansion by providing the hope of a national market. The increasing demands for Wilkeson and Carbonade coal; the growth of shipping; the trade in coal, lumber, and

---

<sup>16</sup> McKean, op. cit., p. 11; Quiett, op. cit., p. 420; and Tacoma. City Planning Commission, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>17</sup> Quiett, loc. cit.



grain with California market and the flowing in of new industries gave Tacoma a powerful stimulus.<sup>18</sup>

During this period, a new theater was completed; schools, churches, and hospitals were built; street improvements were made; and electric street railway system was built; new suburban railways were opened; and factories, warehouses, and commercial establishments were constructed.

Some of the more notable developments which took place included the decision of the Federal Government to give Tacoma the right to use Point Defiance as a public park; the laying of the cornerstone of the first building of the College of Puget Sound, later called the University of Puget Sound; the incorporation of the St. Paul and Tacoma Lumber Mill which was to become the largest mill in the world; and the construction of the Tacoma Smelter.<sup>19</sup> The building industry was also operating at a phenomenal pace as from January 1, 1887, to May 1, 1888, 651 brick and frame buildings were built, and in the succeeding eight months 513 new buildings were built. In 1889, 1410 new buildings were built.<sup>20</sup>

The completion of a railroad from Old Tacoma to the smelter and the dredging of the Puyallup River waterway to a depth of 8 feet caused a rapid growth of the district east of the channel.<sup>21</sup> See Figure 7 for a map of the major industrial sites at that time including the St. Paul and Tacoma

---

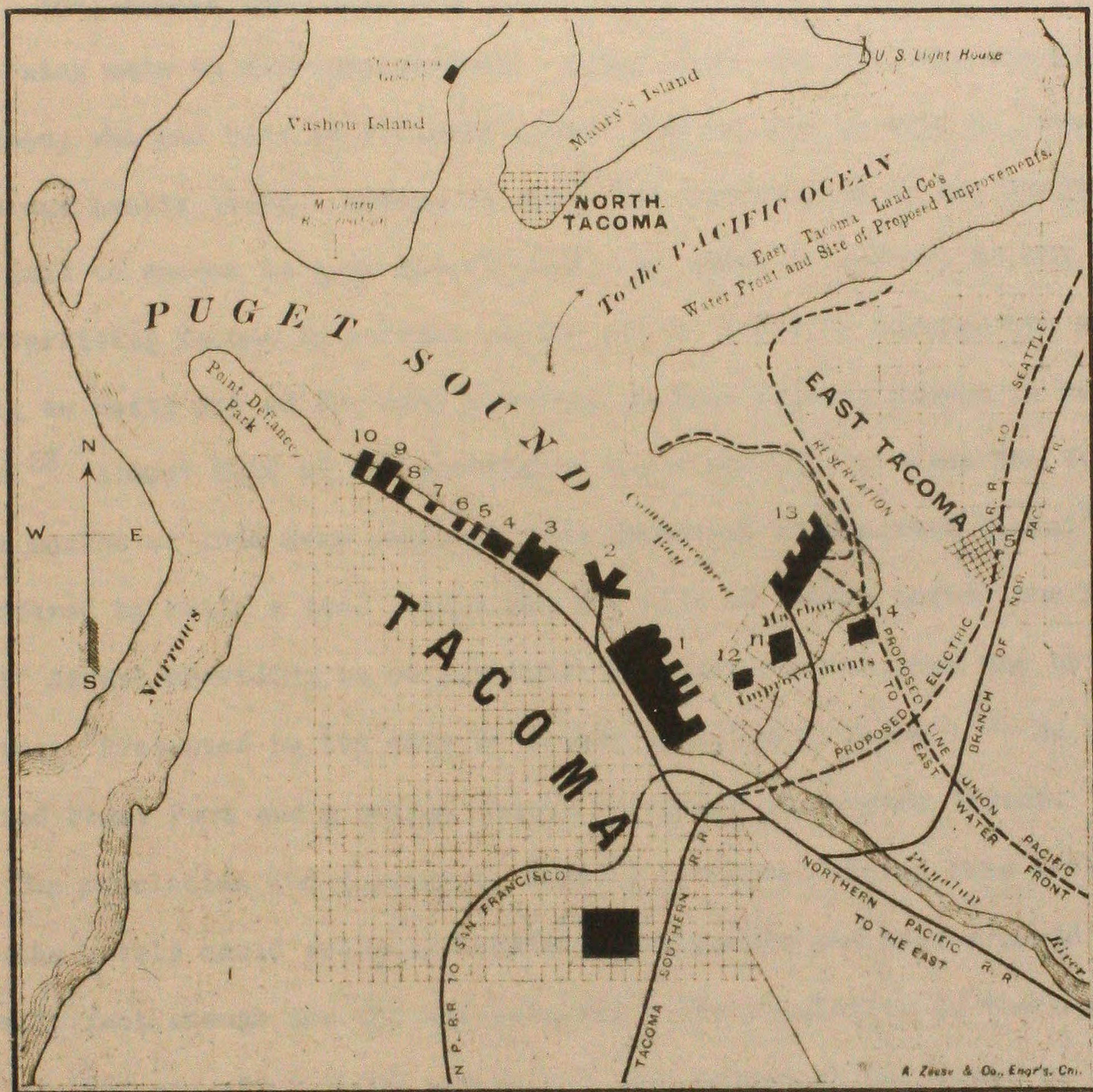
<sup>18</sup>McKean, op. cit., pp. 11-12.

<sup>19</sup>Prosch, op. cit., p. 151; and Tacoma, City Planning Commission, op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>20</sup>Tacoma. Chamber of Commerce, The New Northwest and Tacoma Its Metropolis, (Tacoma: Puget Sound Printing Company, 1890), p. 4.

<sup>21</sup>McKean, op. cit., pp. 14-15.





1. SOUND AND OCEAN DOCKS. 2. COAL BUNKERS. 3. WHEAT ELEVATORS. 4. GREAT TACOMA MILLS. 5. STEAMSHIP DRY DOCK  
 6. FISH CANNERIES. 7. SHINGLE MILLS. 8. BRICK YARDS. 9. RYAN SMELTER. 10. GREAT PACIFIC MILLS.  
 11. ST. PAUL & TACOMA LUMBER CO.'S BIG MILLING PLANT. 12. WHEELER & OSGOOD'S SASH AND DOOR FACTORY.  
 13. COMMENCEMENT BAY IMPROVEMENT CO.'S GREAT OCEAN DOCKS, WAREHOUSING AND MANUFACTURING  
 CENTER. 14. SITE OF HART BROS' BIG MILLS. 15. ORIGINAL PLAT OF EAST TACOMA.

Figure 7

MAJOR INDUSTRIAL SITES IN 1889

Source: Tacoma Illustrated



Lumber Mill, which was the first industry to locate on the tideflats.

By 1890, Tacoma had 50 varieties of manufacturing industries which employed 4,067 persons and produced an output worth \$10,432,955.<sup>22</sup>

Real estate was being sold at an extraordinary rate and fortunes were being made on land speculation. Chief among the realtors was Allen C. Mason, who had been an Illinois school teacher and is said to have come to Tacoma nearly broke. Before he died, his investments in the Northwest were said to amount to over \$10,000,000. He spent as much as \$5,000 a month on advertising Tacoma in eastern papers and is credited through his advertising as being one of the most powerful magnets drawing people to Puget Sound.<sup>23</sup> Almost half of the investment funds handled by Mason the first three months of 1888 were received from investors in New York State!<sup>24</sup> He offered to build a free bridge for the City of Tacoma across the gulch on "I" Street providing he be permitted to erect an arch over the bridge reading: "Presented to the City of Tacoma by Allen C. Mason".<sup>25</sup> He also donated Puget Park and a bridge across the gulch on Proctor Street.

The population was growing so rapidly in Tacoma during this period that the hotels could scarcely handle the newcomers and houses could not be built fast enough for the new settlers. The population in the early part of 1887 was about 5,000 and by the 1890 Census it had risen to

---

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>23</sup> Quiett, op. cit., pp. 421-422.

<sup>24</sup> Allen C. Mason, Compendium of Information Concerning the City of Tacoma and Washington Territory, (Portland, Oregon: A. Anderson and Company, 1888) p. 110.

<sup>25</sup> Bergman, op. cit., p. 30.



36,006, an increase of 620% in just three years! The population increases sizeably again the following year through the annexation of South Tacoma, Oakes Addition, Ridgedale and Fern Hill.<sup>26</sup>

The growth and speculation of Tacoma in the late 1889's was looked upon by Rudyard Kipling, one of its visitors, as follows:

"Tacoma was literally staggering under a boom of the boomiest. I do not quite remember what her natural resources were supposed to be, though every second man shrieked a selection in my ear... The rude boarded pavements of the main streets rumbled under the wheels of hundreds of furious men all actively engaged in hunting drinks and eligible corner-lots. They sought the drinks first. The street itself alternated five-story business blocks of the later and more abominable forms of architecture with board shanties. Overhead the drunken telegraph, telephone, and electric-light wires tangled on the tottering posts whose butts were half whittled through by the knife of the loafer... We passed down ungraded streets that ended abruptly in a fifteen-foot drop and a nest of brambles; along pavements that beginning in pine-plank ended in the living tree; by hotels with Turkish mosque trinketry on their shameless tops, and the pine stumps at their very doors.

The hotel walls bore a flaming panorama of Tacoma in which by the eye of faith I saw a faint resemblance to the real town. The hotel stationery advertised that Tacoma bore on its face all the advantages of the highest civilization, and the newspapers sang the same tune in a louder key. The real estate agents were selling house-lots on unmade streets miles away for thousands of dollars. On the streets-the rude, crude streets, where the unshaded electric light was fighting with the gentle northern twilight-men were babbling of money, town lots, and again money-how Alf or Ed had done such and such a thing that had brought him so much money; and round the corner in a creaking boarded hall the red-jerseyed Salvationists were calling upon mankind to renounce all and follow their noisy God. The men dropped in by twos and threes, listened silently for a while, and as silently went their way, the cymbals clashing after them in vain.

Except for the speed with which cities were laid out and developed, the era of railroad expansion was not a notable period in American city planning. The philosophy of speculation, of treating land like a commodity to be put in handy

---

<sup>26</sup>Tacoma. City Planning Commission, op. cit., p. 12.



packages for quick sale, or regarding townsite promotion as a means of raising ready cash to meet a railroad construction payroll, of making the physical layout of towns subservient to the railroad line and its requirements-these were the dominant attitudes of the railroad town builders. The country was settled-yes, and quickly-but at a price which generations since and those yet to come will be paying for in discomfort, danger, monotony and sterility.<sup>27</sup>

### Suburban Development

Small settlements began to spring up in the outlying areas served by horse-drawn carriages and later by steam-driven transit car lines. The Tacoma Morning Globe estimated there were over 4,000 people living in the suburbs by 1890. An advertisement in the same paper on January 1, 1891, showed "Lake Park", which was acclaimed to be Tacoma's most beautiful suburb. It was located eight miles south of Tacoma and it could be reached by a 25 to 30 minute.... "Pleasant and enjoyable ride through groves and prairies"....on the railroad. The advertisement stated.... "no pains nor expense will be spared to make this an ideal suburban town, in which you can enjoy all the privileges and benefits of city life without its expense or annoyance."<sup>28</sup>

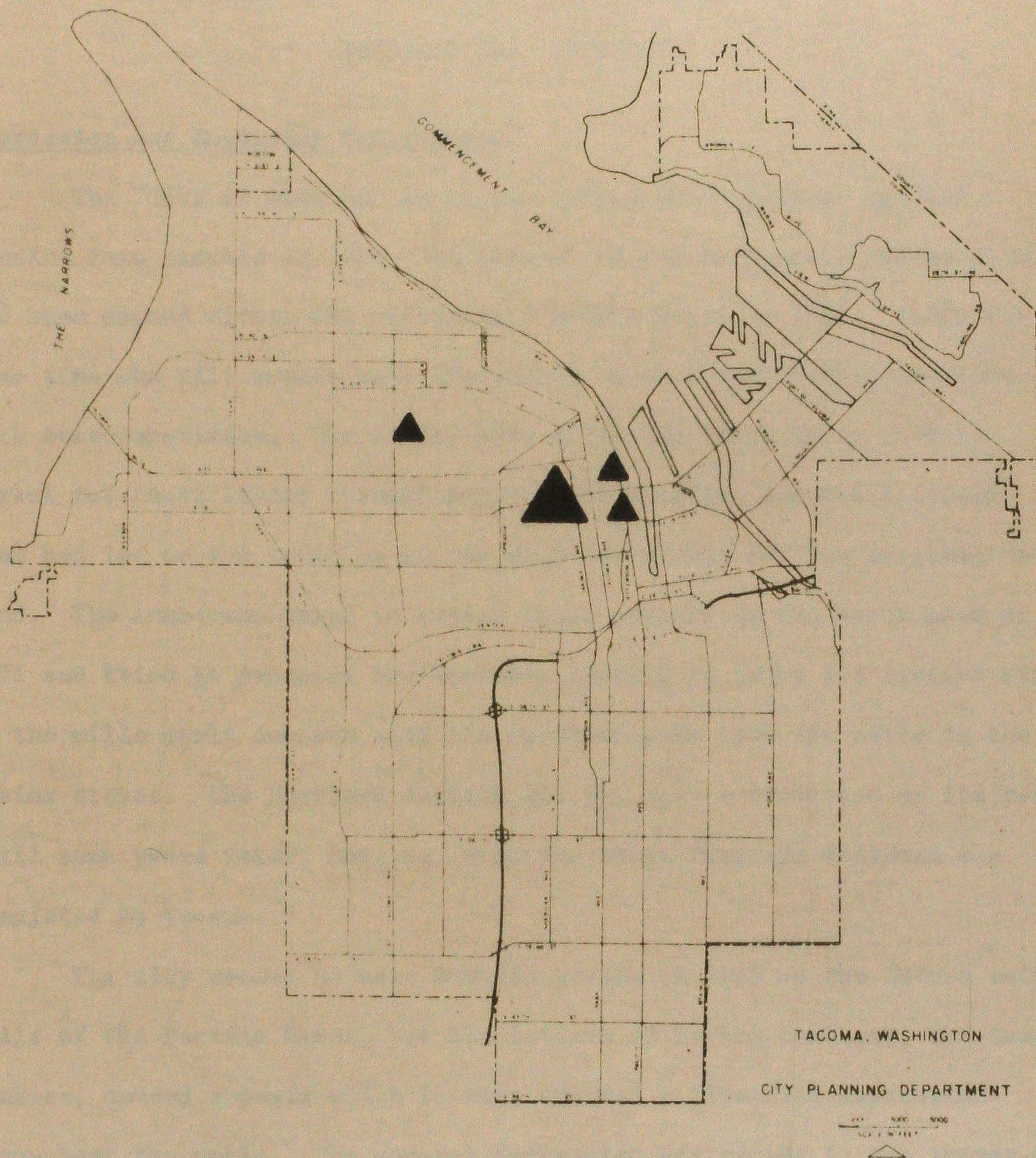
---

<sup>27</sup> Reps, op. cit., p. 412, citing Rudyard Kipling, From Sea to Sea (New York, 1913), II, pp. 43-44.

<sup>28</sup> Advertisement in the Tacoma Morning Globe, January 1, 1891.



## POINTS OF INTEREST: CHAPTER IV



1. New Tacoma  
2. Post Office

3. University of Puget Sound  
4. Whiskey Row

Figure 8



## CHAPTER V

### LAND SETTLEMENT IN TACOMA: DEPRESSION AND SECOND RAILROAD ERA 1892-1920

#### Depression and Expansion Curtailment

The "City of Destiny" as it was called by this time, started running into trouble in 1890 when several of the 70 grocery stores which had been opened within the preceding 9 months began to fail. About the same time the mill owners were distressed as they were having problems with overcompetition. The twenty four mills had first found a ready market for their lumber through ocean-borne traffic, but the railroad boom had led to the building of too many new plants for the existing demand. The lumbermen tried to extend their markets in the early part of 1891 and tried to pressure the Northern Pacific to lower its freight rates so the mills could compete with the northern pine from the mills in the plains states. The Northern Pacific did not make a reduction in its rates until some years later, however, when the Great Northern Railroad was<sup>1</sup> completed to Tacoma.

The city seemed to have hit its stride in 1892 as the future metropolis of the Pacific Coast, but the failure of Baring Brothers, the London bankers, caused a panic which in turn started a financial depression throughout the world. The general depression hit Tacoma in the summer of 1893, and as the city's banking structure was no more sound than its real

---

<sup>1</sup>McKean, op. cit., p. 15.



estate speculation, fourteen of the town's 21 banks failed and fortunes were lost overnight.

Herbert Hunt, in his book, History of Tacoma, wrote:

"Crash followed crash. The commercial universe seemed to be but a house of cards. The country was in the throes of hysteria... Yet there had to be a cleansing. The fabric was shot through with fictitious values and a form of fraud with which periods of speculative enthusiasm usually are poisoned. The gigantic liquidation was in progress and it paralysed every sinew. The Northwest suffered most. Rich men sawed wood, picked blackberries and dug clams for a livelihood. Women with diamonds and valuable deeds resorted to kitchen labor to keep the larder replenished. "Remittance men", who had been despised by their fellows, now were followed about lest they might have a few nickels to lend. Men who had ridden in carriages walked, though the empty streetcars, rattling in their own poverty, would carry them for five cents... At the sheriff's auction block, judgements for \$74,000 against a well known Tacoman were bought by his friends for \$75....There was want in high places and the laborer who had a steady job at \$1.50 a day could pity many of his fellows who, a few months before, had been spending incomes of several thousand a year....Some of the men who owned good buildings became the janitors of them, struggling to retain possession."<sup>2</sup>

During the boom, Henry Villard, of the Northern Pacific, had backed a scheme to build an immense tourist hotel on the bluff overlooking the Sound. It was to be built in the French Chateau style of architecture, with buff-colored brick towers and turrets and it was planned to dominate the hills above the bay as the Chateau Frontenac does at Quebec. When the construction was stopped during the Depression, about \$5,000,000 had been spent on it. Years later it was burned and the shell was taken over by the City of Tacoma.

In 1891 the Union Pacific Railroad Company had shown its intention of entering Tacoma by building a short line in the suburbs. It announced

---

<sup>2</sup>Quiett, op. cit., p. 428.



that this was the beginning of its scheduled western terminus, but in 1896 the Union Pacific stopped work on the extension it was building to Tacoma.<sup>3</sup>

Although the depression caused the curtailment of the boom Tacoma had known, not all development stopped. The Pierce County Courthouse was completed in 1893 and then in the same year, the people of Tacoma voted to purchase water and light facilities for the city. In 1894 a contract for the building of the first Eleventh Street Bridge was built. Pacific Avenue was paved in 1895, replacing the plank roadway that had previously surfaced this street.<sup>4</sup>

#### Klondike Gold Rush

Toward the latter part of the depression, news was received of the Klondike gold discovery. This raised the hopes that Tacoma might profit from the outfitting business. Most of it was handled through Seattle, however, which by this time had three railroads serving it and more ships were calling at its port. One reason there was a lack of shipping at Tacoma was due to the fact that the Northern Pacific had just moved its shipping terminals to Seattle.

The Klondike gold rush was probably the primary factor which established Seattle as Puget Sound's dominant city. In 1890, the year following Seattle's great fire, the two cities were about the same size. Seattle had 42,837 people and Tacoma had, as was mentioned before, 36,006.

---

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 228-229.

<sup>4</sup>Tacoma. City Planning Commission, op. cit., p. 12.



The population in Seattle by 1900, however, was 80,671 while Tacoma's was only 37,714.<sup>5</sup>

#### Weyerhaeuser Timber Company

As early as 1885, the Northern Pacific Railroad offered Frederick Weyerhaeuser, President of Weyerhaeuser Timber Company located in St. Paul, timberlands and a millsite at Tacoma. The offer was turned down, however, for several reasons. Weyerhaeuser did not want to buy or build new mills in the Puget Sound or Portland areas because of uncertain market conditions, reluctance to injure small local mills, emphasis on sale of logs, and employment of capital in land acquisition.<sup>6</sup> The company did build three mills in the Pacific Northwest, however, and in 1900 it established administrative offices in Tacoma to manage its interests in this region.<sup>7</sup>

The first Tacoma office consisted of two rooms and a vault in the old Northern Pacific headquarters building. In 1906 the offices were moved to the Mason Block and in 1912 to the Tacoma Building, in which the company headquarters remain to this day.<sup>8</sup>

#### Second Railroad Building Period

By the turn of the century, Tacoma was developing into an important industrial city on Puget Sound, while Seattle grew as a commercial center.

---

<sup>5</sup>McKean, op. cit., pp. 17-18.

<sup>6</sup>Ralph W. Hidy, Frank E. Hill, and Allan Nevins, Timber and Men, (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1963) pp. 211-231.

<sup>7</sup>The Weyerhaeuser Timber Company, You and Your Company (Seattle: Metropolitan Press Printing Co., 1948) p. 7.

<sup>8</sup>The Weyerhaeuser Timber Company, Men, Mills and Timber (Tacoma: Weyerhaeuser Timber Company, 1950) pp. 6-7.



Shipping also was becoming important to the economy of Tacoma. In 1902, nearly 900 vessels stopped at Tacoma, carrying cargoes worth nearly \$41,000,000.<sup>9</sup>

About 1900 four railroads began working toward completion of their connections with all the major cities in the Northwest.

By 1903, Tacoma had over 300 mills and factories, which employed about 8,000 persons and had an output of over \$23,000,000. More than 25 new factories were started that year and over 1,000 employees had been added. Lumber was the principal industry in the city and it was responsible for nearly one third of the total manufactured products of the city.<sup>10</sup>

President Theodore Roosevelt visited Tacoma that same year and laid the cornerstone for the Masonic Temple on St. Helens Avenue.<sup>11</sup>

In 1905, the Union Pacific again began buying land in Tacoma based upon plans for terminal and track facilities for a new line between Portland and Puget Sound as part of E. H. Harriman's competitive fight against James J. Hill. Another boom started as millions were spent for terminals, deep water docks and warehouse sites. Tacoma raised \$100,000 in 48 hours to buy freight yards for the road. As soon as right-of-way was purchased in the city, the Union Pacific began construction of a tunnel near the Jefferson Avenue area. Work stopped after a half mile of the tunnel into the city had been constructed as the Union Pacific and the Northern Pacific entered into an agreement for trackage rights into Tacoma over the existing

---

<sup>9</sup> A. French, Tacoma: The City of Destiny (Tacoma: Central News Co., 1903), p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> McKean, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>11</sup> Tacoma. City Planning Commission, op. cit., p. 12.



Northern Pacific road. The tunnel was later filled.<sup>12</sup>

There was an influx of real estate promoters to the city during this period, among whom was Major William J. Bowes, who later became a familiar name on radio with his amateur hour. He platted the suburb Fircrest in 1907 and later gave the City of Tacoma two sphinxes, which were erected in Wright Park, but they were made of plaster and soon disintegrated under the rains.

The Great Northern made an agreement with the Northern Pacific similar to the one which the Union Pacific and Northern Pacific had made and in 1909 ran its first train into the city over the Northern Pacific tracks. Until that time, Tacoma had suffered under the inconvenience of being a one-railroad town. Things changed rapidly after that and in January, 1910 the Union Pacific began running its trains from Portland over the Northern Pacific tracks. This was followed in May, 1911 by the arrival of the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul, which made Tacoma its Pacific Coast terminus. The Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul made elaborate plans for the handling of oriental trade. In 1912 the Northern Pacific completed a tunnel through Point Defiance, at a cost of \$10,000,000, making the line a water grade route.<sup>13</sup>

#### Stadium High School

During this period, the city began reconstructing Villard's hotel on a smaller scale than originally planned. By 1906 what was to become

---

<sup>12</sup>McKean, op. cit., p. 18; and Quiett, op. cit., p. 430.

<sup>13</sup>Quiett, op. cit., pp. 430-431.



Stadium High School was completed at a cost of \$300,788. F. Heath, the architect for the building, studied "Old Woman's Gulch" which was west of the building and decided it would make a good stadium. After a somewhat bitter controversy, the public raised \$49,570 and work was begun on the stadium. The bottom of the gulch was 247 feet below the street level and it was filled to its present depth by sluicing. When it was completed the concrete stadium could seat 30,000 people and it helped make Stadium High School one of the most beautiful public schools in the country.<sup>14</sup>

### State Capital

When the state constitution was adopted in 1889, the permanent location of the state capital was left to the future.<sup>15</sup> Tacoma had shown some interest in becoming the capital and it almost succeeded in 1905. George Stevenson was angry with Senator Ruth of Thurston County and in an attempt to hurt Ruth he introduced a bill which provided for moving the state capital from Olympia to Tacoma. To the amazement of nearly everyone, it passed both houses with relative ease and what started out to be a bluff had become very serious for Thurston County. By this time, the Tacoma Chamber of Commerce offered a site for the capitol within Wright Park. At this, the heirs of the Wright Estate threatened to sue for the recovery of the land, since it had originally been given to the City of Tacoma to be used as a park, not a state capitol. Governor Mead vetoed the bill, however, and the state capital remained at Olympia.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 429; and Bergman, op. cit., pp. 41-42.

<sup>15</sup>Historical article in the Tacoma News Tribune, April 25, 1939.  
p. 14.

<sup>16</sup>Bergman, op. cit., pp. 43-44.



### Ruston

The town of Ruston was incorporated in 1906. Prior to this it had been known as "Smelter", from the time the Tacoma Smelting and Refining Company had bought the land upon which the town was started in 1890. The town was named after W. R. Rust, who had been instrumental not only in the development of the largest smelter on the Coast, but also in the building of Tacoma and Pierce County. From its inception as a fourth class city, Ruston has been a city within a city since Tacoma surrounds it almost completely. The smelter at Ruston has been one of the big factors in the growth of both Tacoma and Pierce County.<sup>17</sup>

### Population Growth

Population more than doubled during the decade from 1900 to 1910. The population grew from 37,714 in 1900 to 83,743 in 1910, a ten year increase of 122 percent. This was largely due to the railroad construction and the industrial potential of this region.<sup>18</sup>

The outlook for Tacoma was again bright and the following propaganda from the Forum, dated December 21, 1907, serves to point out the speculation that once again was in the air:

"Tacoma, truly "The City of Destiny", has one of the finest harbors in the world, ample tide lands, practically unlimited level land, both near a water level and on the plateau up a rise of from one to three hundred feet, and the shortest railroad haul from Puget Sound on a water level to the Canon of the Columbia. Here at Tacoma, the only point on Puget Sound where such conditions exist, we find the necessary and sufficient

---

<sup>17</sup> William P. Bonney, History of Pierce County, Washington, Vol.1 (Chicago, Pioneer Historical Publishing Company, 1927) pp. 553-554.

<sup>18</sup>Tacoma. City Planning Commission, op. cit., p. 23.



elements of the great city--or heart of the great city--of the future. Other points exceed Tacoma in some one thing, but Tacoma is the only point that has enough of everything and is lacking in nothing. To these may be added huge beds of the finest coking coal in the Northwest, and from Mount Tacoma--or Rainier--a near, unlimited, and eternal water power, equalling Niagara, to turn into electricity. In fact, the mountains adjacent to the Sound assure the entire region practically unlimited water and electrical power, but some points are more remote from a supply than are others. In this and in coal, however, none even equal Tacoma...This means at the Golden Gate a city equal to Paris, at Portland a city equal to Philadelphia, at Gray's Harbor another Boston, at Seattle at least one million people, and at Tacoma another New York with at least five million people within the next fifty years.<sup>19</sup>

After rapid population growth between 1900 and 1910, the city developed more slowly, but more steadily as an industrial center.

The railroad lines began to suffer from overcompetition among themselves and the opening of the Panama Canal in 1914 decreased the rail tonnage. The Belt Line Railway, which was later to become the prime mover for 76 industries, was also started that year.

The advertising slogan, "Watch Tacoma Grow", which had been adopted at the time of the Lewis and Clark Exposition in Portland was abandoned when it was obvious that both Portland and Seattle were growing more rapidly than Tacoma. Another slogan which had been used "You'll Like Tacoma", was dropped when it was learned many visitors when they visited the area were surprised when they found Tacoma was not a breakfast food.<sup>20</sup>

#### Tideflats Plan

V. G. Bogue, a nationally known engineer, was hired by the Tacoma Chamber of Commerce in 1912 to prepare a plan for streets and waterways

---

<sup>19</sup> Ella E. Ryan, "Tacoma: Past, Present and Future", The Forum, December 21, 1907, p. 1

<sup>20</sup> Quiett, op. cit., p. 437.



for the tideflats industrial area. It may have been a practical plan, but it was never adopted by any agency, city or county. The area was outside the city limits at that time and no action was taken towards the dedication of waterways or main streets. Since no one was authorized to enforce the plan, the streets and waterways consequently were constructed as best met the wishes and convenience of each property owner.<sup>21</sup>

### World War I

The advent of this great conflict caused a sudden expansion of Tacoma's industrial activities, especially in shipbuilding. In 1918 Tacoma shipyards launched 50 vessels and employed 14,896 men. The year before, in 1917, these same shipyards employed 4,540 men and the total number of men employed by the factories was about 15,000. Shipbuilding, although it expanded most noticeably, was not the only industry which was enlarged during the war. In 1917 there were 1,175 building permits issued while in 1918 this figure jumped to 3,093.

Activity at the newly opened Camp Lewis (later called Fort Lewis) also increased. Normally 20,000 men were to be stationed there, but during the most active period in 1918 about 60,000 men were in training there.<sup>22</sup> The war was short, however, so the impact was not sustained.

During the war a port district with a commission of three elected by the County, was established. Provisions were made for modern municipi-

---

<sup>21</sup>Tacoma. Chamber of Commerce, "Harbor Development Committee Report" (unpublished report regarding the tideflats industrial area dated September 20, 1937, mimeographed)

<sup>22</sup>Tacoma. Commercial Club and Chamber of Commerce, "1918 Activities", (unpublished brochure on the City of Tacoma.)



cipally owned docks which were properly equipped and open to shipment at reasonable charges.<sup>23</sup>

The merchant shipbuilding which had been carried on during the World War was discontinued in 1920, after the artificial stimulus caused by the war had passed.<sup>24</sup>

#### Establishment of City Planning Commission

Some of the civic leaders began to get concerned over beautification of Tacoma and wanted to make the city attractive. They also were concerned with traffic problems and felt a planning commission should be established in order to help alleviate some of the present and future problems the city was faced with.<sup>25</sup>

The year 1920 saw the establishment of a City Planning Commission which consisted of seven members appointed by the Mayor and three ex-officio members, including the mayor, the city attorney and the city engineer.

Section six of the ordinance stated:

"It shall be the duty of said Commission, and they shall have power, except as otherwise provided by law, to recommend and make suggestions to the City Council and all other public authorities, concerning the laying out, widening, extending, parking and locating of streets, sidewalks and boulevards, the relief of traffic congestion, the betterment of housing and sanitary conditions and the establishment of zones or

---

<sup>23</sup>"Tacoma", Encyclopedia Americana, (1959), XXVI, pp. 205-206, and Tacoma. Chamber of Commerce, "History of Tacoma, Wash.", (unpublished paper on history of Tacoma, mimeographed) p. 4.

<sup>24</sup>McKean, op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>25</sup>Personal interview with Mr. A. B. Comfort, former Chairman of the Tacoma City Planning Commission, April 30, 1965.



districts limiting the use, height, area and bulk of buildings and structures; to recommend to the City Council and all other public authorities plans for the regulation of the future growth, development and beautification of the municipality in respect to its public and private buildings and works, streets, parks, grounds and vacant lots; to recommend plans consistent with the future growth of the City and its inhabitants, sanitation, proper service of all public utilities, harbor, shipping and transportation facilities; to do and perform any and all other acts and things necessary or proper to carry out the provisions of this act; and in general to study and to propose such measures as may be advisable for the promotion of the public interest, health, morals, safety, comfort, convenience and welfare of said City and of the area six miles adjacent thereto." <sup>26</sup>

With the establishment of the Planning Commission, although it had little or no power, an official advisory capacity was to be fulfilled.

The Commission had little or no public support soon after it was established, however, and most of the real estate brokers were against it, therefore it was not very effective to begin with. <sup>27</sup>

#### End of Railroad Era

The year 1920 not only saw a suspension of merchant shipbuilding and the establishment of the City Planning Commission, it also saw the end of an era draw near. In that year the Northern Pacific traffic department left the headquarters building in Tacoma and moved to Seattle. The following year, over the protests of many Tacomans, the western headquarters was shifted to Seattle. The old headquarters building which had

---

<sup>26</sup> Tacoma. City Council, City Ordinance Number 7208. 1921, Section 6.

<sup>27</sup> Comfort, personal interview, April 30, 1965.



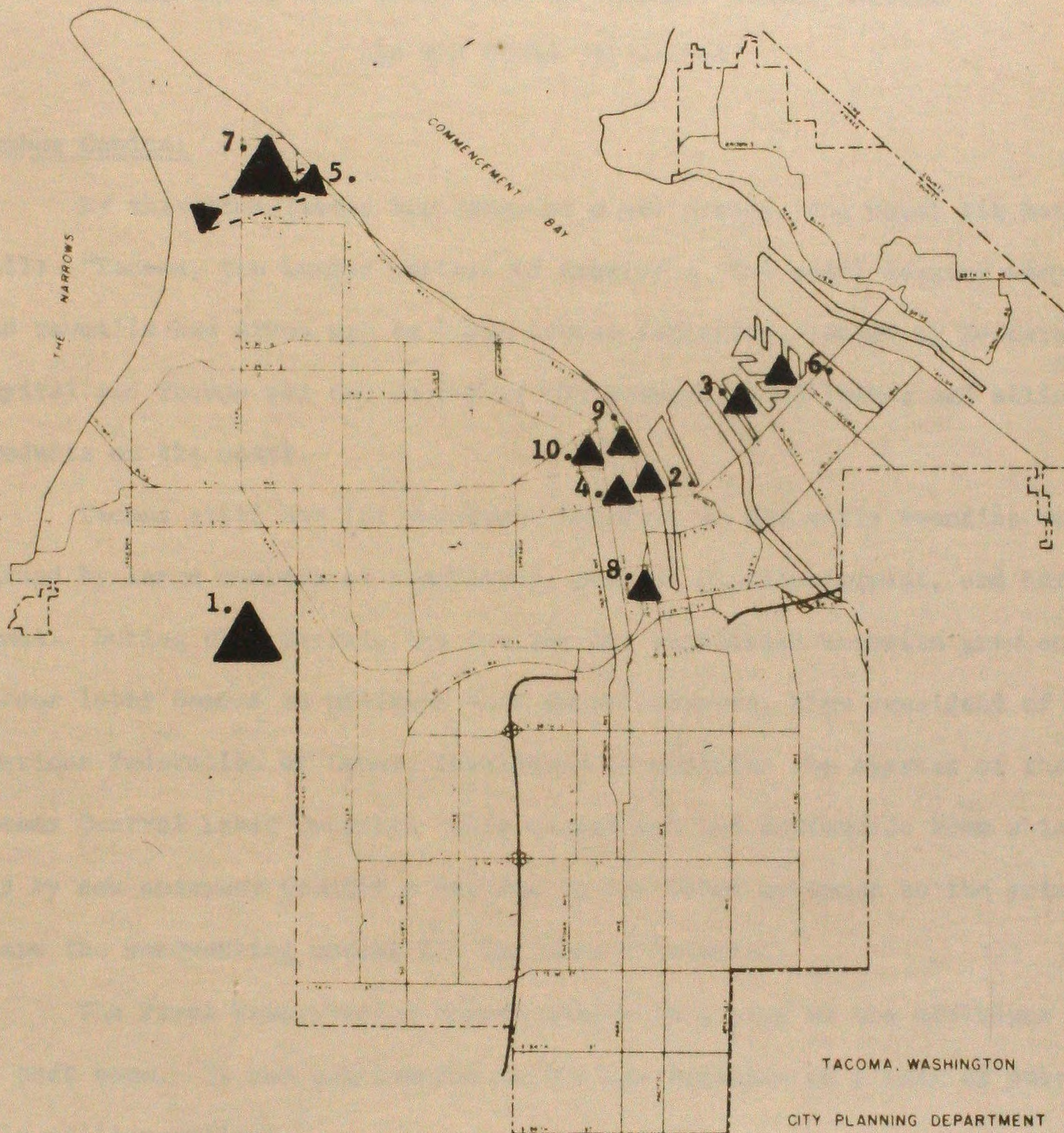
housed the Northern Pacific since 1886 was soon depressingly vacant, a visible sign that the city was more or less abandoned by the railroad which brought it into being. The building was finally purchased by the city and turned into a police station.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup>Quiett, op. cit., p. 431.



## POINTS OF INTEREST: CHAPTER V



- |                               |                              |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Fircrest                   | 6. Port of Tacoma            |
| 2. Masonic Temple             | 7. Ruston                    |
| 3. Osaka Kaisha Lines         | 8. Union Pacific R.R. Tunnel |
| 4. Pierce County Courthouse   | 9. Weyerhaeuser Headquarters |
| 5. Point Defiance R.R. Tunnel | 10. Wright Park              |

Figure 9



## CHAPTER VI

### HISTORY OF LAND SETTLEMENT IN TACOMA: LUMBER CAPITAL AND WAR YEARS 1922-1945

#### Lumber Capital

By this time Tacoma had taken on a new slogan, one which fit her well: "Tacoma, the Lumber Capital of America". The small logging camps and sawmills had given way to large timber interests, backed by Eastern capital and Tacoma was the center of the production of lumber and allied products on the coast.

Tacoma still had its problems, however, as the early twenties were marked by large numbers of unemployed, general disillusionment, and hard times. During this period, the feeling for industrial unionism grew and Tacoma labor became so militant that Samuel Gompers, then President of the American Federation of Labor, threatened to withdraw the charter of the Tacoma Central Labor Council. This threat and the nationwide boom which was by now underway brought a decline in the labor movement to the point where the woodworking unions all but ceased to exist.<sup>1</sup>

The First Presbyterian Church stands as a sign of the affluence of that boom. It was constructed in the mid-twenties at a cost of one-half million dollars.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Tacoma. Chamber of Commerce, "History of Tacoma", p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>R. L. Polk & Company, Tacoma City Directory...1926 (Tacoma: R. L. Polk and Company: 1926) p. 63.



### Decline in Trade with Orient

For several years Tacoma was the point of transfer between the railroad and the steamships to the Orient. The Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul silk trains leaving Tacoma broke all freight-speed records in reaching Chicago, but in 1925 the Milwaukee Railroad went broke and in 1926 the headquarters of the Osaka Shosen Kaisha and the Milwaukee Railroad were moved to Seattle. The great ocean terminals were abandoned by the railroad and were turned over to smaller companies.<sup>3</sup>

### City and Industrial Expansion

In 1927 the City of Tacoma annexed all of the tideflats area to the Puyallup River, including the Port of Tacoma and what is now Northeast Tacoma.<sup>4</sup> (See Figure 21 in the Conclusion.)

Wood pulp and chemical plants were built in Tacoma in 1928. Local interests built a kraft mill, which was later purchased by the St. Regis Kraft Company. This mill has become one of the largest plants in the city. A western branch of the Hooker Electrochemical Company was also established in Tacoma that year. This firm manufactured chlorine and caustic soda, which were needed by the pulp and paper industry.<sup>5</sup>

### Zoning

On April 7, 1927, Tacoma's first zoning ordinance was adopted by

---

<sup>3</sup>Quiett, op. cit., p. 434.

<sup>4</sup>Tacoma. Department of Public Utilities, "History and 1952 Report of the Tacoma Municipal Belt Line Railway" (Tacoma, 1952) various pages.

<sup>5</sup>McKean, op. cit., pp. 18-19.



the City Council. The property along a good portion of the transit lines was zoned commercial, fostering strip zoning along many of the major arterials of today.<sup>6</sup> Two of the most noticeable areas are shown on Figures 10 and 11. These strip zones were taken from a 1945 zoning map.<sup>7</sup>

### Depression

The years of prosperity from the end of the postwar depression to the crash of 1929 were years of intense activity in Tacoma. The stock market crash of 1929 and the depression which followed hit Tacoma hard. Lumbering and shipping declined and, unlike previous depressions when railroad construction, the Klondike gold rush, and World War I had pulled the city out, the depression continued. "Help Wanted" signs were soon gone and large numbers of unemployed began a desperate search for jobs. Communal gardening, collective begging and other self-help movements were instituted. There was no physical growth during this period but as the national deflationary trend was checked, Tacoma slowly began to revive. There was an increased demand for lumber and prices rose. Some of the unemployed found jobs and others subsisted on direct relief or on jobs created by the Works Progress Administration.<sup>8</sup> One of the projects undertaken by the WPA was the further development of Point Defiance Park.

---

<sup>6</sup>Tacoma. City Council, Ordinance 9147; and Erling Mork, "Local Planning Administration" (unpublished correspondence course completed in 1961) Lesson 7, p. 2.

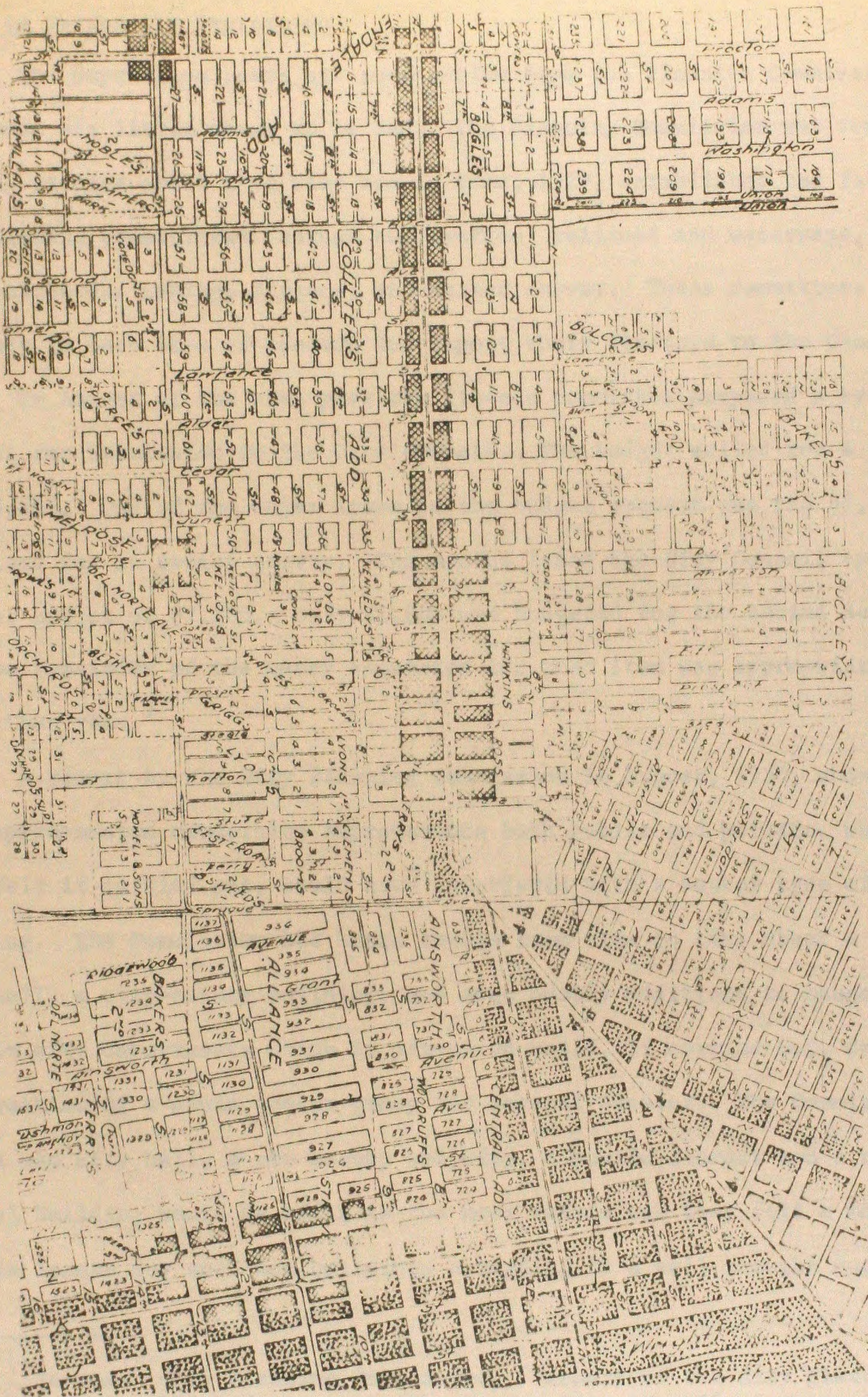
<sup>7</sup>Tacoma. City Planning Commission, Official Zoning Map, 1945.

<sup>8</sup>Tacoma. Chamber of Commerce, "History of Tacoma" p. 4.



Figure 10





Strip Zoning West of CBD: 1945

Figure 11



### Planning During the Depression

The Depression years saw some action from the Planning Commission. But there was little money to be had. The Planning Commission was conducting studies about that time and in June, 1929, established the following standing committees: street and traffic, railroad and waterways, parks and boulevards, zoning, finance, and master survey. These committees were to study in each area of concern and report their findings to the Commission. In August of the same year the finance committee prepared a budget request for submission to the City Council. The budget called for a total of \$15,925. One of the major items on the budget request was the \$4,000 solicited for an aerial survey. Two months later the City Council approved a total budget of \$2,300. Only \$1,000 was budgeted for the aerial survey, but the remainder of the money requested for that item was appropriated later that year.<sup>9</sup>

A report by the City Planning Commission in August, 1930, showed some apprehension concerning improvements both public and private, which they felt if carried out, could have interfered with a better type of planning. The Commission had heard rumors from time to time about a new city hall, a city-county building, and even costly additions to house certain city departments which it perceived would, if carried out, delay construction of a civic center group for several decades. The Commission felt a new city hall, a new county building, a public library and a new federal building would be built in the near future and they felt a move "not to locate any such new buildings according to a well thought out

---

<sup>9</sup>Tacoma. City Planning Commission, "Report of the City Planning Commission" (unpublished report to the Tacoma City Council, August, 1930) P.5.



Master Plan would be a breach against modern city building and a desirable future for Tacoma."<sup>10</sup>

An aerial survey was completed in 1931 and was to be used as an aid in the survey and analysis in the preparation of a master plan.<sup>11</sup>

During those years the Planning Commission proposed a plan which had a boulevard running out to Point Defiance connecting all parks along the way. An attempt was made to establish a system of playgrounds for the children. Other proposals were also made, but due to public apathy and lack of funds, most of the proposals were never carried out.<sup>12</sup>

### "Galloping Gertie"

A bridge across the Tacoma Narrows had long been a dream of the residents of Tacoma, and of Pierce and Kitsap Counties. A movement was started by the Federation of Improvement Clubs in a letter dated December 27, 1923, implying the many benefits which would be derived from such a bridge.<sup>13</sup> The Tacoma Chamber of Commerce had made feasibility studies of the project as early as 1928. The Sixth Avenue Business Mens' Club began promoting the bridge in 1929 and in 1933 they requested the Tacoma Chamber of Commerce to petition the Federal Government for funds to finance the bridge. After much negotiation, construction started on November 25, 1938.

---

<sup>10</sup>Tacoma. City Planning Commission, "Official Minutes" (June 11, 1929; August 21, 1929; October 16, 1929; and April 30, 1930).

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., (November 18, 1931).

<sup>12</sup>Comfort, personal interview.

<sup>13</sup>Federation of Improvement Clubs (unpublished letter regarding the proposed Tacoma Narrows Bridge, December 27, 1923).



The \$6,600,000 bridge was opened on June 30, 1940, forming a direct highway connection between the city of Tacoma and the peninsula area to the north. A PWA grant supplied nearly \$3,000,000 of the bridge cost and the sale of revenue bonds supplied the remainder. "Gallopig Gertie" as it came to be known because of the way it would undulate in the wind, lasted only 130 days before it collapsed into the Narrows. This startled many people, including the Seattle insurance executive who had written some of the \$5,000,000 insurance on the bridge. He decided it couldn't possibly fall and pocketed the premium. (He was later sentenced to prison.)

Plans for a stronger and safer bridge were delayed by World War II.<sup>14</sup>

### Population Growth

The city grew very slowly during the Depression years as it increased in population from 106,817 to 109,408, an increase of about 2%. The population of Pierce County increased by 11% during this same period.

World War II brought a great movement of people into the city which more than made up for the slow growth during the decade prior to 1940. By the end of the war, the population had increased to about 136,000 persons and 75% of the growth was due to migration. (Migration accounted for only 1% of the total gain from 1930 to 1940.)<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup>Paul W. Harvey, Tacoma Headlines (Tacoma, Tacoma News Tribune, 1962) pp. 80-82; and Tacoma Narrows Bridge and McChord Field - Official Opening, (Tacoma: 1940), pp. 3-18.

<sup>15</sup>Tacoma. City Planning Commission, "Site-History-Population", p. 23.



## World War II

About a year and a half prior to Pearl Harbor, McChord Field was opened just south of Tacoma. McChord Field, Ft. Lewis and the city's industrial complex led Tacoma to play an important part in the war effort.

Population increases in the Tacoma metropolitan area during this period created problems in that there was an urgent need for water, sewers, treatment plants, fire protection, building and zoning code controls, transportation, sanitation, health and trailer camp regulations, garbage disposal, facilities for recreation, education, libraries and hospitalization and new housing. The problems within the city limits were equally disturbing but were handled a little more easily because of existing legal powers of city officials and existing legal methods for financing construction of projects.<sup>16</sup>

## Planning During World War II

In 1942, Major Cain appointed a "Mayor's Research Committee on Urban Problems". Professor Paul R. Fossum of the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma was appointed chairman. The committee was to study the urban problems in the Tacoma metropolitan area and report its findings and recommendations to the City Council.

The Planning Commission discussed the study at their meeting on September 15, 1942. They felt that any expense paid from city funds should be used in conjunction with the regular City Planning Commission that had been organized according to State Law and City Ordinance.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> Puget Sound Regional Planning Commission, Puget Sound Region, War and Post War Development (Washington: Government Printing Office, May, 1943), pp. 108-109.

<sup>17</sup> Tacoma. City Planning Commission, "Official Minutes" September 15, 1942.



The study was conducted and the report was presented to the City Council in August, 1943. It was published in 1944 under the title "Tacoma-The City We Build". This was the first effort at long range comprehensive planning for Tacoma and the surrounding metropolitan area. It was very broad in scope and was probably more valuable as a background study than as a plan for the future development of Tacoma and its metropolitan area. It did include what might be construed to be very generalized land use maps of residential and industrial areas. Among other things, the report also included a proposed city center plan and a proposed tideflats development plan, and a proposed arterial system plan. (See Figures 12, 13 and 14) None of these plans were ever carried out however.<sup>18</sup>

Shortly after this report came out, the first full time "Planning Engineer" was hired and the planning staff was under the Commissioner of Public Works.

Prior to this time, consultants had been used for professional advice on planning matters. Arthur D. McVoy had been engaged in 1942 by the Mayor's Research Committee to make a survey of the Tacoma Metropolitan Area. Speaking at a Kiwanis Club meeting in November, 1942, he said:

"We are nearing the end of the lumber era...Although lumbering will continue as a major industry, the time is arriving when Tacoma must shift from an all lumber to a diversified industries policy. Potentialities of the tideflats area are almost unlimited, and the city should guard that area with keen seriousness."<sup>19</sup>

In 1944 the Planning Commission prepared a report with recommendations providing for "lasting improvements in the health, wealth and

---

<sup>18</sup> Mayor's Research Committee on Urban Problems, op. cit., pp. 46-63.

<sup>19</sup> News article in the Tacoma News Tribune, November 25, 1942.



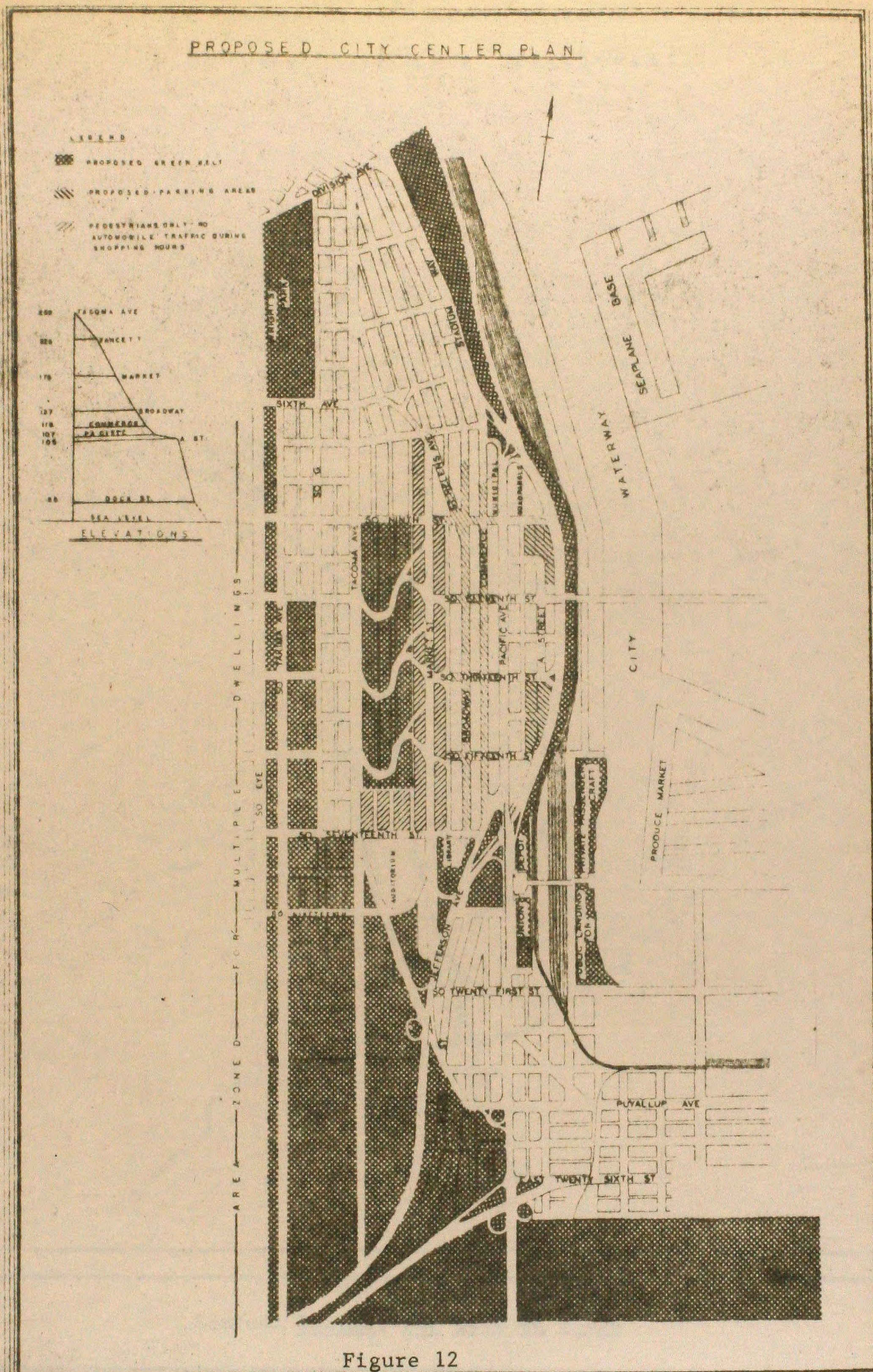


Figure 12

Source: Tacoma, The City We Build



## PROPOSED TIDE-FLATS DEVELOPMENT

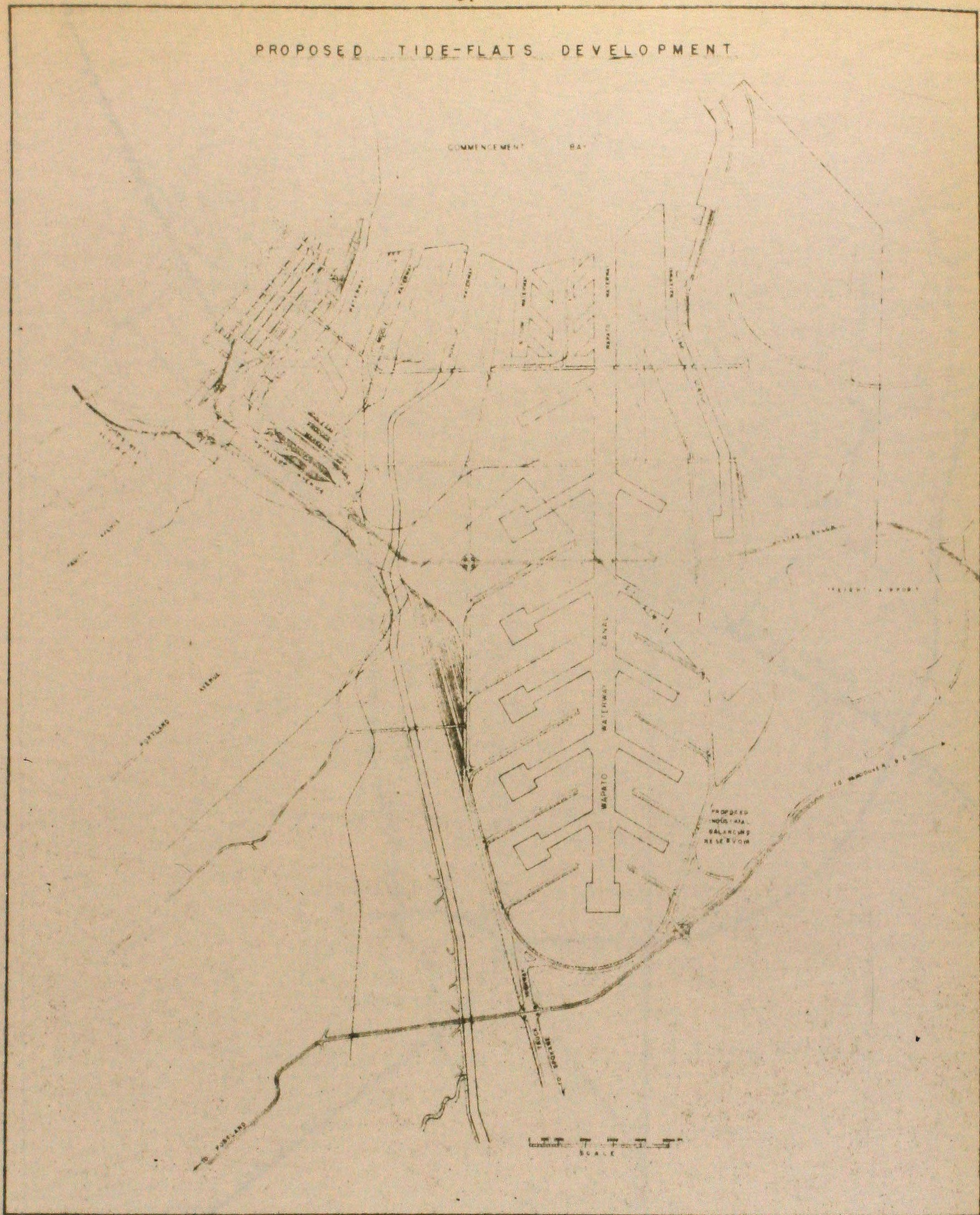


Figure 13

Source: Tacoma, The City We Build



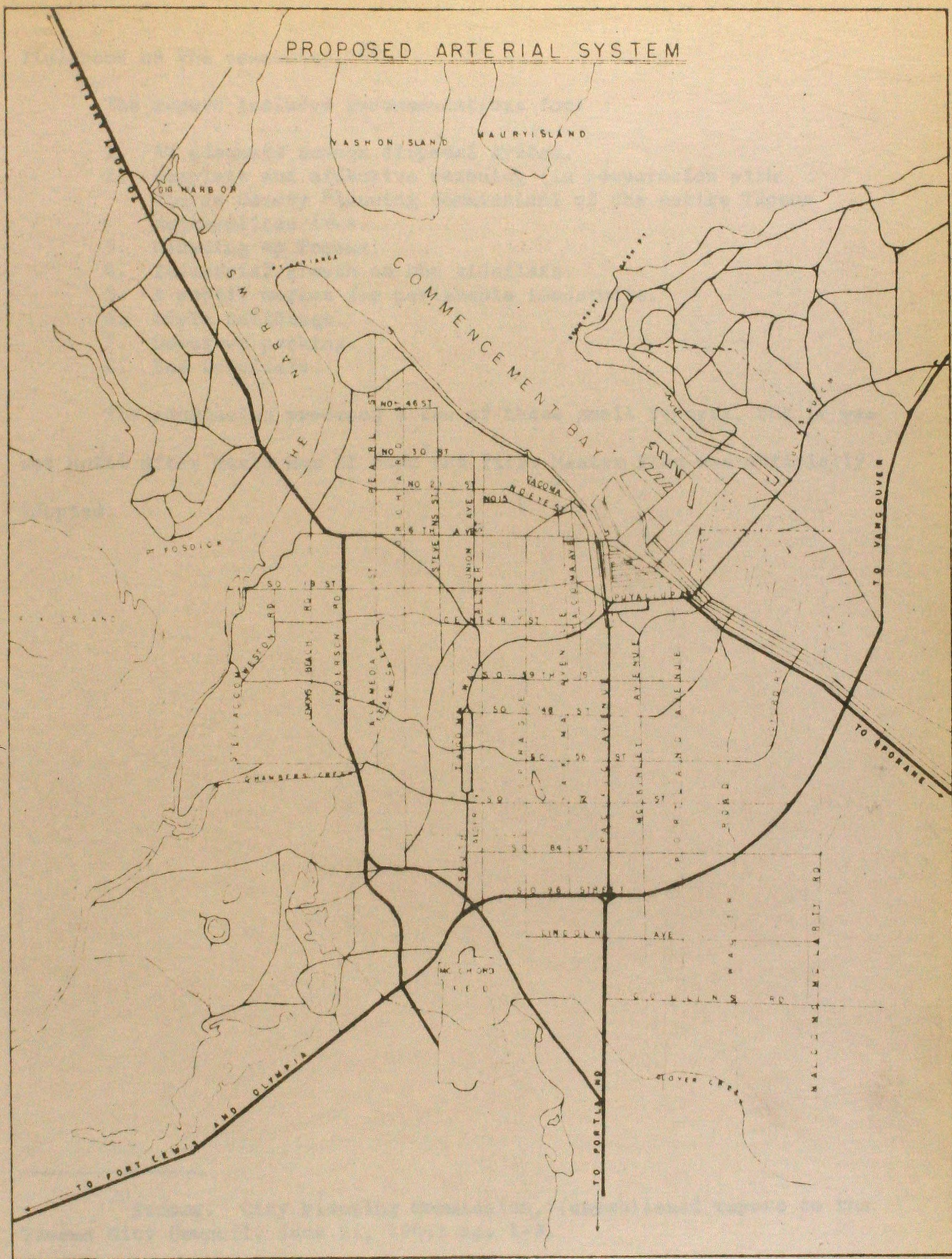


Figure 14  
Source: Tacoma, The City We Build



livelihood of the community."<sup>20</sup>

The report included recommendations for:

1. An adequate sewage disposal system.
2. Complete and effective rezoning (in cooperation with Pierce County Planning Commission) of the entire Tacoma Metropolitan Area.
3. Cleaning up Tacoma.
4. Industrial growth on the tideflats.
5. A public market for perishable foodstuffs.
6. Civic buildings.
7. Downtown parking.
8. Bus terminals.

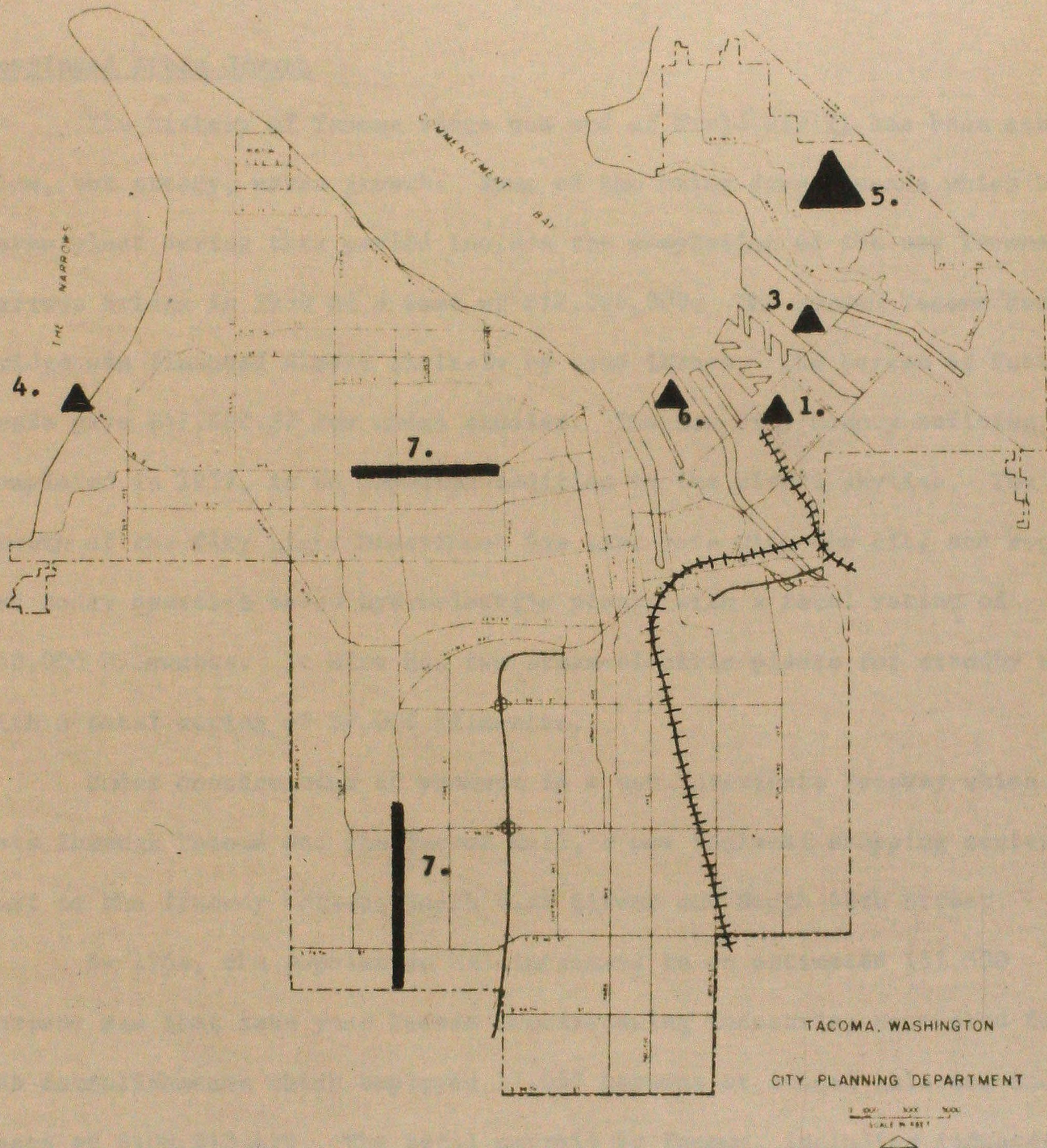
The commission produced a few of these small reports, but it was not until after World War II that the first Master Plan was officially adopted.

---

<sup>20</sup> Tacoma. City Planning Commission, (unpublished report to the Tacoma City Council, June 21, 1944) pp. 1-3.



## POINTS OF INTEREST: CHAPTER VI



1. Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Terminal and Tracks
2. First Presbyterian Church
3. Hooker Electrochemical Co.

4. Narrows Bridge
5. Northeast Tacoma
6. St. Regis Kraft Company
7. Strip Zoning

Figure 15



## CHAPTER VII

### HISTORY OF LAND SETTLEMENT IN TACOMA: POSTWAR ERA 1946-1965

#### Continued Urban Growth

The history of Tacoma since the end of World War II has been one of slow, but steady, urban growth. Some of the major developments which have taken place during this period include the completion of the new Tacoma Narrows Bridge in 1950 at a cost of \$18,000,000. The second Tacoma Narrows Bridge was financed almost entirely by bond issues. The Bureau of Public Roads gave \$47,667.37 for model studies. The new City-County Building, completed in 1959, is an imposing addition to the city's skyline. The growth of the City Light Department has kept pace with the city and region and today operates seven hydroelectric plants with a total rating of 358,000 kilowatts. It also has two steam-electric plants for standby use with a total rating of 59,000 kilowatts.

Under construction at present is a new Interstate Freeway which cuts through Tacoma and the Tacoma Mall, a new regional shopping center next to the freeway between South 41st Street and South 48th Street.

By 1964, the population had increased to an estimated 151,500 persons and that same year Tacoma manufacturing industries accounted for 466 establishments which employed 17,054 persons at annual salaries and wages of \$108,313,429. The total payroll in Tacoma, including industrial construction, etc., for the year 1964 was \$244,054,000 as compared with \$134,436,745 in 1945. The city is presently the world's leader in the production of fir doors and the Tacoma Smelter refines about one tenth of



the nation's copper.<sup>1</sup>

While overall growth continues, retail stores in Tacoma's Central Business District are having problems as retail sales and property values decline. In 1955, 240 businesses were in operation and in 1964 this number had decreased to 154. Problems are increased in this area since much of the land is owned by absentee landlords, many of the buildings are obsolete, the land is very hilly and parking is scarce.<sup>2</sup> At present, the Weyerhaeuser Timber Company is considering a possible move which could locate the firm's administrative offices in another building in Tacoma or in another city.

Although the population of Tacoma is increasing, it is not growing nearly as fast as are the outlying areas, especially those to the south and west. This is causing a population shift in the metropolitan area that is putting the Central Business District further away from the center of population. See Figure 16. The new Tacoma Mall, on the other hand, is now close to that center.

#### Fife and "Tidehaven"

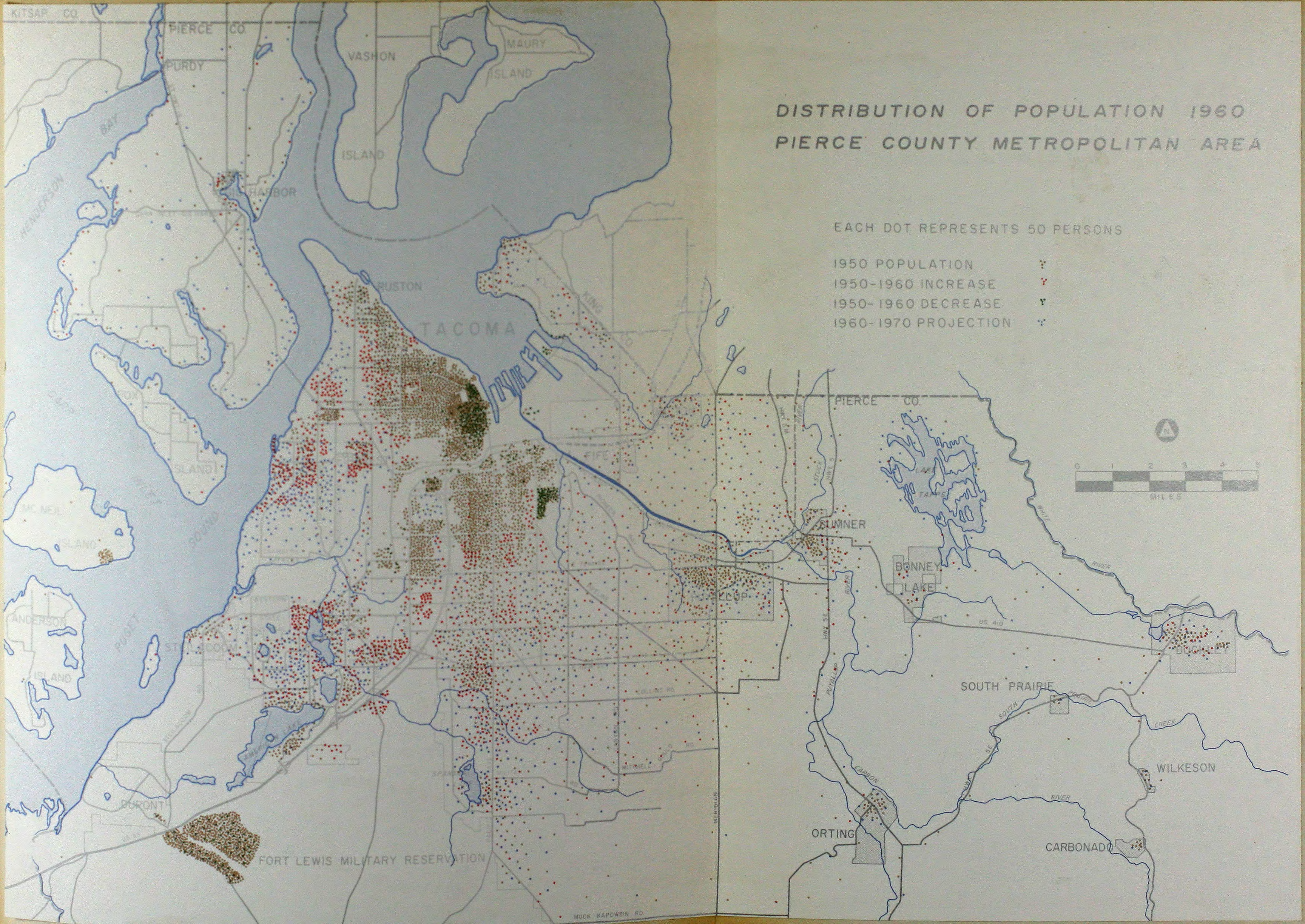
The City Manager felt that in order to properly develop the tide-flats area it should all be within the city limits and have the advantages of services offered by the city. He felt annexation of the area would assist in a speedy development of industry in Tacoma. The City Council, in 1956, went on record opposing any annexation of the area to a city

---

<sup>1</sup>Tacoma. Chamber of Commerce, Tacoma Statistics, 1965. (Tacoma: Tacoma Chamber of Commerce, 1965) pp. 3-10.

<sup>2</sup>"Forces Shaping Central Tacoma" (unpublished student group report, Seattle, University of Washington, 1964) Appendix.







other than Tacoma. On December 24, 1956 the City Manager met with representatives from the U.S. Oil and Refining Company to ascertain the company's attitude toward including its industrial complex in the proposed incorporation of an area to be called "Tide Haven". The City Manager was also concerned the complex might be annexed to the newly incorporated city of Fife. The company indicated that the request to form another city was merely a delaying action to prevent the area from being annexed to Fife. The company also indicated it did not want to be annexed to the City of Tacoma for fear of increased taxes.

The industrial area in question had been included in the original Fife incorporation petition, but the City of Tacoma was able to remove this area from the proposed incorporation since the Port of Tacoma owned a good share of the land. When Fife did incorporate, it included a long narrow corridor to within about 600 feet of Tacoma's city limits just north of Marshall Avenue and 54th Avenue East. This meant that if the "Tidehaven" incorporation went through it could be accomplished only by including this narrow strip between Tacoma and Fife. The necessary number of people needed for the incorporation did not live in the industrial area, but rather on the other side of the narrow corridor. In 1959, after a long battle, a narrow strip between the residential area needed for incorporation and the industry was annexed to the city of Tacoma, thereby negating any future incorporation moves in that area.<sup>3</sup>

#### Planning Activity Since World War II

In 1946 the Planning Commission hired J. Haslett Bell, a Planning

---

<sup>3</sup> Tacoma. City Planning Department files, used with permission of Russell Buehler, Planning Director.



Consultant from Portland, to assist in preparing a Master Plan for Tacoma. He served in an advisory capacity to the Planning Commission and the Planning Staff which at that time was a division of the Public Works Department. The planning staff then included three persons plus some part-time summer help. Before Bell resigned in 1951 a number of basic studies had been completed.<sup>4</sup>

The City Council passed a resolution in 1946 which designated the civic center area in the city recommended by the Planning Commission. The area designated encompasses the site for the City Library and the site for the City-County Building.<sup>5</sup>

In the change to the Council-Manager form of government in 1953, the Planning Department was organized in the Administrative Code of the city as a separate department under the City Manager. Its function was to provide staff services to the Planning Commission.<sup>6</sup>

Many studies and reports have since been made by the Planning Department including the "Renewal Areas" report in 1954. It pointed out the physical deterioration and blight in the form of obsolete and dilapidated residential, commercial and industrial structures which were becoming more prevalent and delineated general areas in which blight could be expected to exist.<sup>7</sup> An Office of Urban Renewal has since been established to cope with this problem. A Citizens' Committee for Tacoma's future development

---

<sup>4</sup> Mork, op. cit., Lesson 1, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Tacoma. City Council, Resolution Number 11977, March 4, 1946.

<sup>6</sup> Mork, loc. cit.

<sup>7</sup> Tacoma. City Planning Commission, Renewal Areas (Tacoma: 1954)



was organized in 1957 at the request of the City Council. It prepared reports which were submitted to the Council as proposed recommendations. Transit, Airport, Public Buildings, Street Lighting, Urban Renewal, Off-Street Parking and other problems were studied.<sup>8</sup>

In August, 1959 the City Council voted 7-2 to rezone 35 acres near South 43rd Street and Pine for Tacoma Freeway Mart's proposed shopping center (Tacoma Mall). The original request was for rezoning about 80 acres and it was turned down by a 5-4 margin. The City Planning Commission had voted against the 80 acre rezone 5-3 and the 35 acre compromise had lost Commission approval with a 4-4 tie.<sup>9</sup>

Prior to the rezone hearing, Dr. Edgar Horwood, Planning Consultant and University of Washington professor, was asked to evaluate the rezone application. In his report he stated:

"Conclusive evidence shows that there is no need or desirability to change the Comprehensive Zoning Plan in the public interest to accommodate a center of this size. Specifically:

- A. At least 400,000 people within a 15 mile radius are needed to support a center of this size without serious effects on existing shopping districts and the community tax base.
- B. Growth. The Tacoma urban area has an insufficient growth rate in both population and economic base to justify this large an addition to its present retail space for at least ten years.
- C. Impact. The impact of a 400,000 sq. ft. shopping center on both the central business district and adjacent centers would be unreasonably severe in terms of both private and public investment, including urban renewal. The central

---

<sup>8</sup>Citizens' Committee for Tacoma's Future Development, "Report and Recommendations" (unpublished report to the Tacoma City Council, mimeographed, December, 1957) pp. 1-9.

<sup>9</sup>News article in the Tacoma News Tribune, August 25, 1959.



business district, for example, would stand to lost approximately 25% of its general merchandise and apparel sales.

- D. Competitive situation of Tacoma. A strong retail central core with competitive lines, large inventories and ready access to business government and professional services gives Tacoma its best chance to attract regional trade. This drawing power should not be dissipated."

In concluding, Dr. Horwood stated that a separate regional shopping center "would result in a situation where the central business district could not compete on an equal basis".<sup>10</sup>

The Planning Department has recently completed a number of studies including "The Generalized Land Use Plan" and "Central Business District Plan", which are both elements of the Comprehensive Plan. Figure 17 shows existing land use in 1957 and Figure 18 shows the Generalized Land Use Plan. At present another land use study is being conducted to update the existing land use map.

"The CBD Plan" took into account the potential threat of the Tacoma Mall in its assumptions concerning the Tacoma CBD through 1980. It was felt the retail sales in the CBD would drop in the mid-sixties due to the decentralization of auto sales and the impact of the Tacoma Mall. The plan also stated the sales outlets in the downtown area are expected to stabilize in the late sixties and grow moderately in the seventies. Some of the goals for the core of the CBD included: a compact, pedestrian oriented space development, the widest range of comparison shopping goods in the metropolitan area, and development of evening activities to focus

---

<sup>10</sup>"Forces Shaping Central Tacoma", loc. cit., citing a report prepared for the Tacoma City Council by Dr. Edgar Horwood.



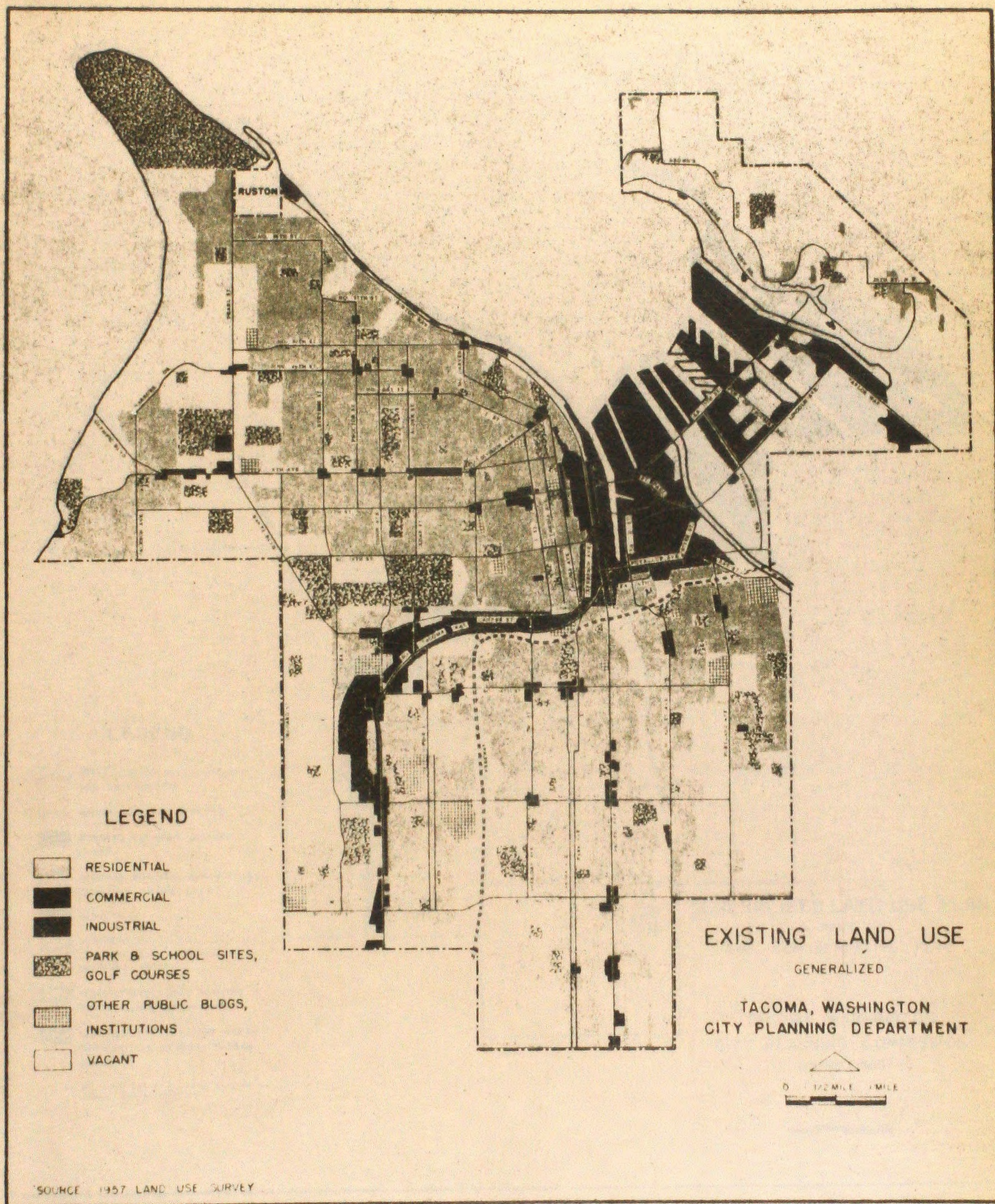


Figure 17



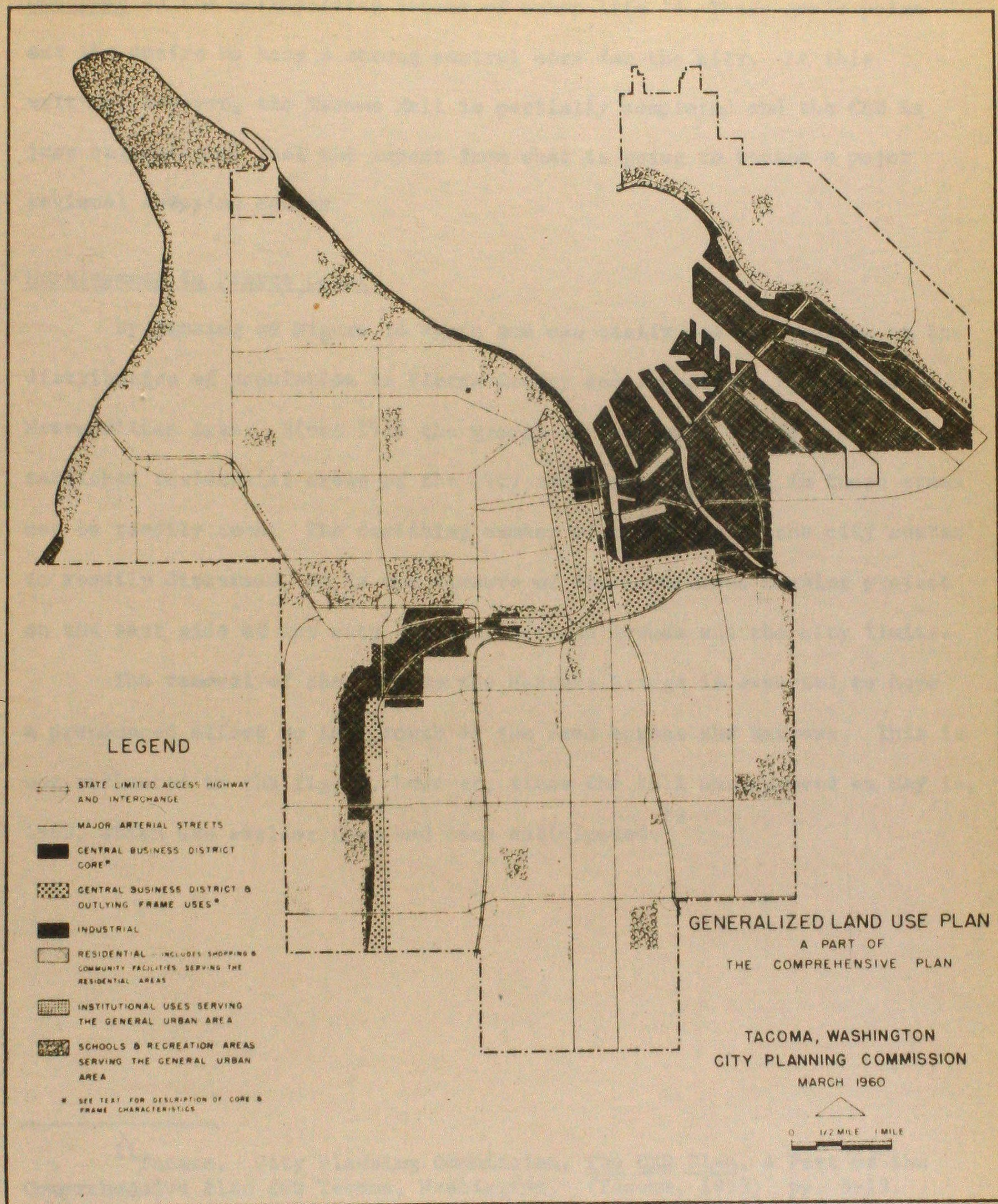


Figure 18



downtown as the metropolitan center of urban life.<sup>11</sup> These goals point out the desire to keep a strong central core for the city. At this writing, however, the Tacoma Mall is partially completed and the CBD is just beginning to feel the impact from what is going to become a major regional shopping center.

#### Development in Pierce County

By looking at Figure 16 again one can easily see the changes in the distribution of population in Pierce County and especially in the Tacoma Metropolitan Area. Since 1950 the growth to the south and west of the established residential areas of the city and the projections in these areas can be readily seen. The declining number of residents in the city center is readily discerned, as is the closure of the government housing project on the east side of the city between Portland Avenue and the city limits.

The removal of the toll on the Narrows Bridge is expected to have a pronounced effect on the growth of the area across the Narrows. This is not reflected in the figure, however, since the toll was removed on May 14, 1965, which was earlier than had been anticipated.<sup>12</sup>

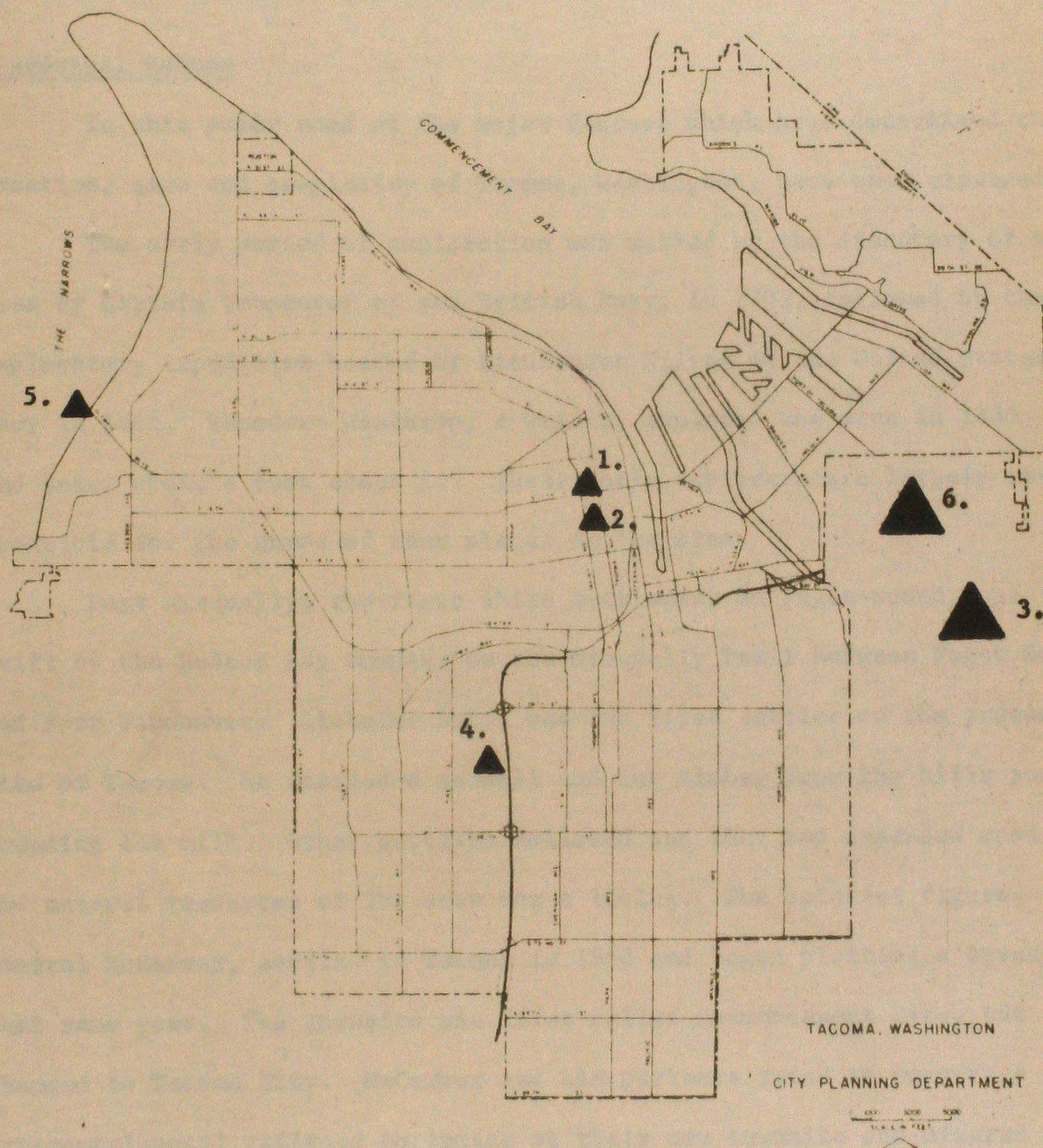
---

<sup>11</sup>Tacoma. City Planning Commission, The CBD Plan, A Part of the Comprehensive Plan for Tacoma, Washington. (Tacoma, 1963) pp. 5-15.

<sup>12</sup>Personal interview with Mr. Robert Eveleigh, Pierce County Planning Director, May 13, 1965.



## POINTS OF INTEREST: CHAPTER VII



- 1. City-County Building
- 2. City Library
- 3. Fife

- 4. Tacoma Mall
- 5. Tacoma Narrows Bridge
- 6. "Tidehaven"

Figure 19



## CHAPTER VIII

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

#### Historical Resume

In this paper some of the major factors which have determined the location, size and complexity of Tacoma, Washington, have been examined.

The early period of exploration was marked by the discovery of the area by Captain Vancouver of the British Navy, in 1792, followed by the exploratory expedition headed by Lieutenant Wilkes of the United States Navy in 1841. Theodore Winthrop, a writer, explored the area in 1853 and later wrote a book about it. These early explorers are largely responsible for the names of many places in the area.

Fort Nisqually, the first white settlement on Puget Sound, was built by the Hudson Bay Company on the Nisqually Trail between Puget Sound and Fort Vancouver. Nicholas DeLin was the first settler on the present site of Tacoma. He started a sawmill and cut timber from the hills surrounding the mill. Other settlers followed and they too depended upon the natural resources of the area for a living. The colorful figure, General McCarver, settled in Tacoma in 1868 and began platting a townsite that same year. The townsite was first called Commencement City, but soon changed to Tacoma City. McCarver and his partners tried to encourage a transcontinental railroad to locate at their new townsite and offered the Northern Pacific Railroad land and money if it would choose Tacoma as its terminus.

In 1873 the Northern Pacific chose a site just south of Tacoma City for its Pacific Coast terminus and acquired about 16,000 acres of



land in the immediate vicinity. This land was to be sold as lots on the speculative market. It was platted first by Frederick Law Olmstead and after that plan was disapproved for being too radical, it was plotted on the gridiron by Colonel Isaac Smith. The new town grew under the name New Tacoma and was consolidated with "Old Tacoma" in 1884. The late 1880's saw the completion of the Northern Pacific's transcontinental line over its own track and during this time, Tacoma was engrossed in a full scale boom which was by far her most colorful era.

Tacoma was hit hard by the panic of 1892. It was about ten years before another railroad building period brought vitality back to Tacoma. Not only did the railroads bring back life to Tacoma, but they started another boom. This time much of the wild speculation was left out and there was not as much land sold to non-resident speculators. It was during this period that Tacoma nearly became the Capital of the State of Washington. A bill which provided for moving the state capital from Olympia to Tacoma had passed both houses, but it was vetoed by Governor Mead. This same era also saw the creation of a city within a city in that the town of Ruston was incorporated even though its area was surrounded on three sides by Tacoma and on one side by Commencement Bay. In the early 1900's the Weyerhaeuser Timber Company located administrative offices in Tacoma to manage its Pacific Northwest holdings. By 1912, Tacoma was becoming an important industrial city in the Pacific Northwest, so the Chamber of Commerce hired V. G. Bogue to prepare a plan for the expansion of the tideflats industrial area. Unfortunately, it was not adopted and the area was developed as best met the wishes and convenience of each property owner. The opening of Camp Lewis and World War I quickened Tacoma's growth, but only for a short time. In 1921 the Northern



Pacific moved its western headquarters to Seattle. This, coupled with the labor and other problems of the day, created hard times for a few years.

The City Planning Commission was established about this time in order to help beautify the city and ease its traffic problems. Little was done by the Planning Commission until after World War II, however, due to lack of money and public support.

The mid-twenties saw Tacoma become "The Lumber Capital of America" and for a few years the future again looked bright. In 1929, however, the Wall Street crash and ensuing Depression caused the cessation in the growth of Tacoma.

The stimulus needed for Tacoma to continue to develop was provided when World War II broke out and Fort Lewis, McChord Field and the city's industrial complex were depended upon for help in the Nation's war effort. During the war a "Mayor's Research Committee on Urban Problems" was appointed and this committee studied and reported on the urban problems of that time. This committee worked without the sanction of the City Planning Commission.

Since the end of World War II, Tacoma has continued to grow, but at a much slower pace. A second Narrows Bridge was built to replace the one which collapsed in 1940 just 130 days after it was completed. The Central Business District, plagued with obsolete buildings, lack of parking space, poor topographical features and a shifting population, was faced with another problem by 1965: "The Tacoma Mall", a shopping center on the south side of the city.

Planning since World War II has become an important factor in the development of Tacoma and the City Planning Department has conducted and



is presently conducting studies which should aid in the systematic growth of Tacoma in the future.

#### Changes in Spatial Structure

The literature reviewed in Chapter II was kept in mind throughout the writing of this paper in order to determine which location and urban growth theories best represented the location and urban growth of Tacoma. The following conclusions and limitations discuss the findings of this paper.

The original settlement, although it could hardly be construed to be a community, was a primary service settlement which served as the first step in the distributive process for outgoing lumber products. The site had easy access to timber, a nearby source of water power and a deep harbor on Puget Sound which led to the Pacific Ocean. Although the choice of the site may have been accidental at that time, in that there may have been other sites in the vicinity which would have been just as suitable for a small sawmill, the site proved to be well located in later years from the standpoint of natural resources. The small settlement served as a primary service area, dependent upon its natural resources, until the railroad located its terminus there, making the future city an important break in transportation between overland rail shipments and ocean commerce. The combination of many forces then has caused Tacoma, like many other cities, to locate and grow up at a point which gave it economic advantages. Another important factor in the growth of Tacoma was the land promotion on the part of the railroad and real estate men. The land speculation which followed, although it caused Tacoma to grow, was the generator of many of the problems which still face Tacoma today. The Central Business



District, which is near the point of the railroad terminus and the origin of New Tacoma, still suffers from a high degree of absentee land ownership and small lot sizes. This can be observed on Figure 20. The possibility of modernizing facilities or assembling land into larger parcels required for effective retailing is almost nonexistent without the aid of urban renewal.

It is difficult to determine the pattern of Tacoma's growth to compare with the urban land use theories since no land use studies were made until after World War II and the old maps which have been found were not adequate to determine anything more than how much of the city was platted. Figures 21 and 22 show the growth of Tacoma by annexations and population. Since 1909 very little residential type area has been annexed to the city, therefore most of the population growth since that time has been due to the process of filling in. One can see the growth periods in Tacoma by looking again at Figure 22. Although population growth can be analyzed with the use of ward information back to the early 1900's, it is nearly impossible to compare this information with census data in 1950 and 1960. Census tracts were first used in 1950 and the boundaries of the wards and census tracts are different enough to make interpolation nearly impossible without the use of a computer and block information. It is, however, highly doubtful the latter could be found.

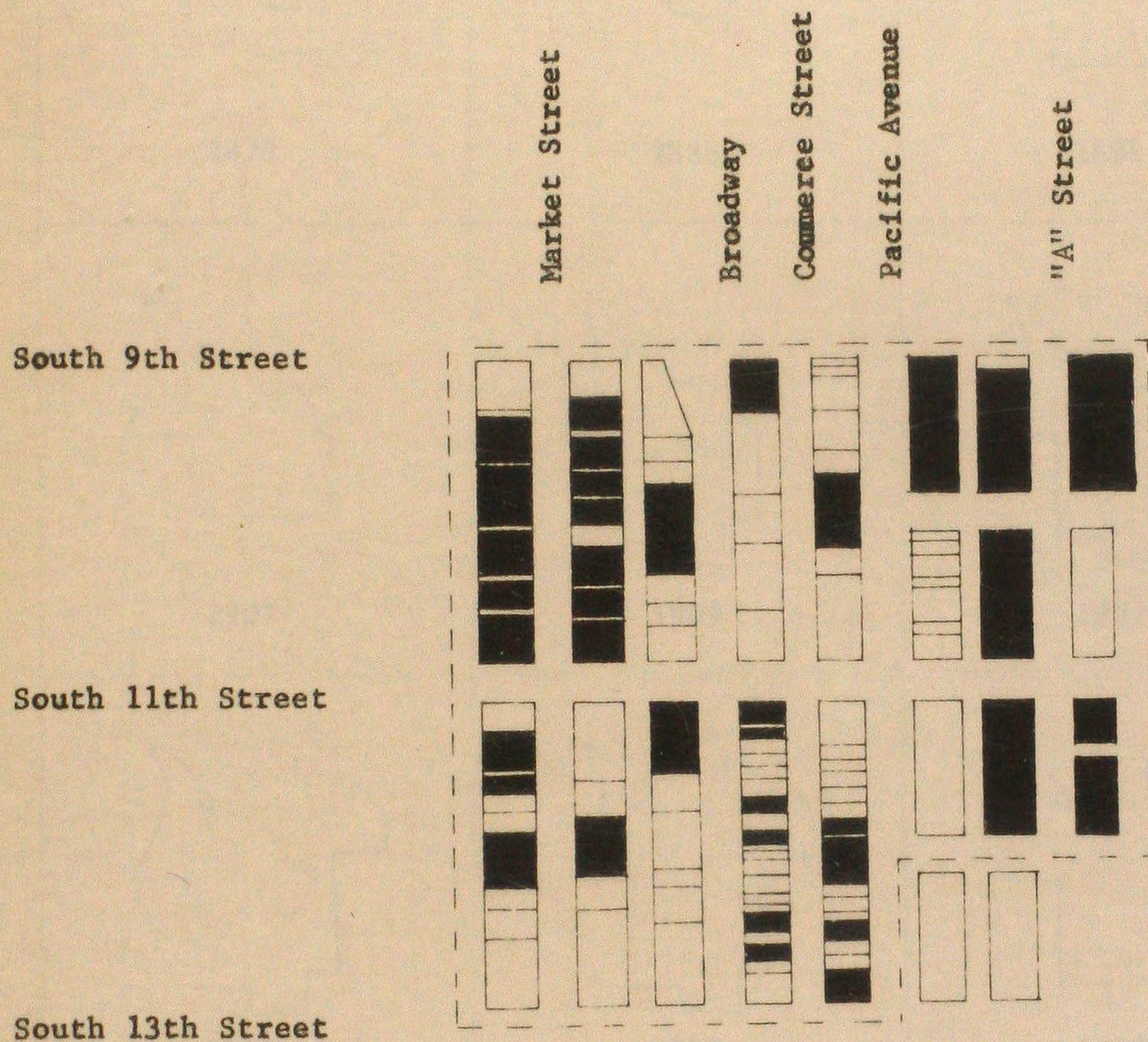
It might be possible to reconstruct Tacoma's growth since 1890 by using Polk's Tacoma City Directory and a computer. Directories for various years could be used and information such as business type and address could be punched on a card. A mapping technique, recently devised at the University of Washington, could then be used with the aid of the computer to plot the information on grid coordinate maps. Gross land use maps



## CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT LAND OWNERSHIP PATTERNS

## ABSENTEE AND SITE SIZE

Source: County Treasurer



Absentee Ownership - The Parcels of land that are owned by persons not residing in the Tacoma Metropolitan Area and those classified as estates and trusts.



Local Ownership - The parcels of land that are owned by persons residing in the Tacoma Metropolitan Area.

Figure 20



## GROWTH OF TACOMA BY ANNEXATIONS

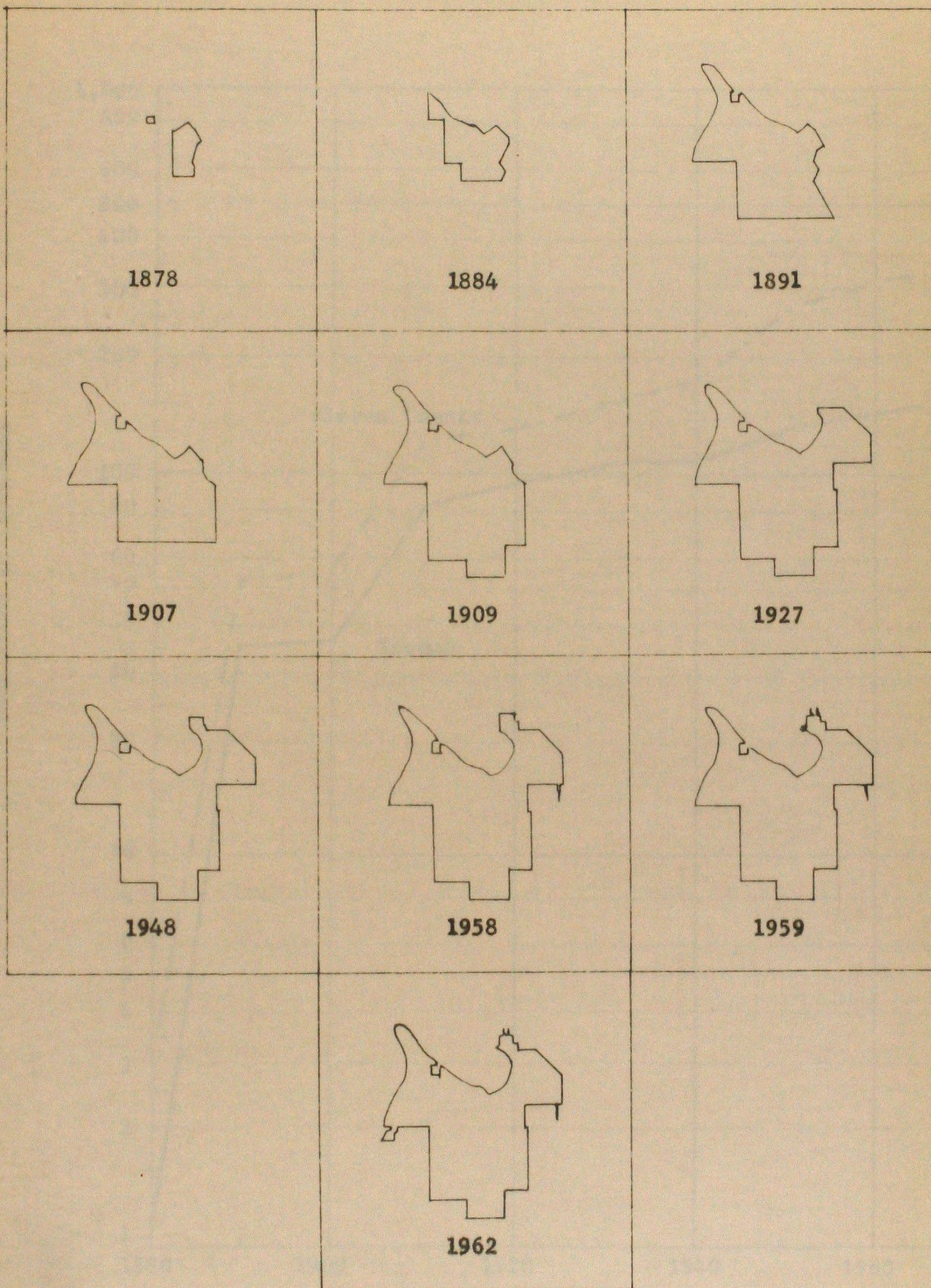


Figure 21



## POPULATION TRENDS

TACOMA &amp; PIERCE COUNTY: 1880 - 1965

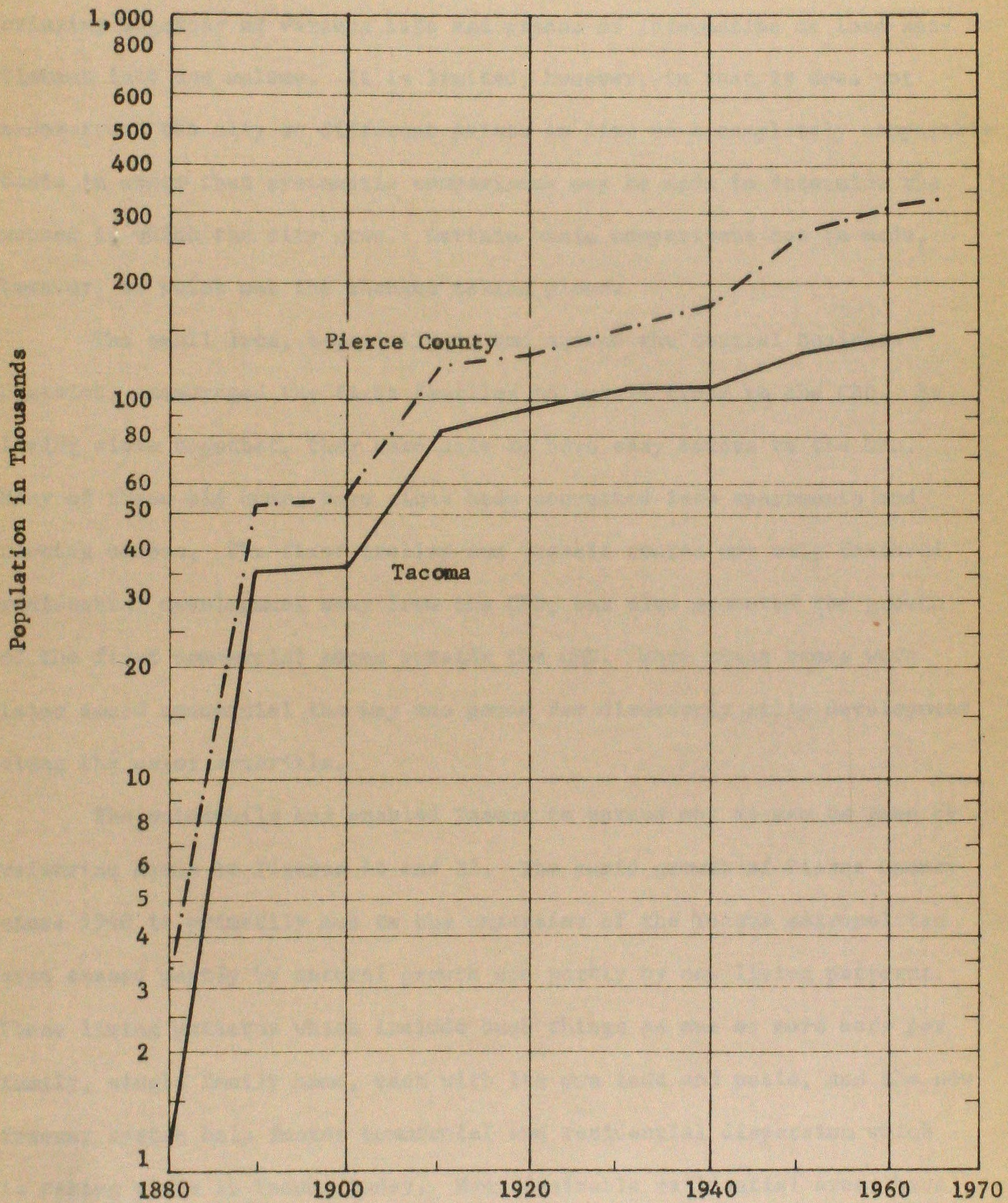


Figure 22



could thereby be constructed for various points in time and changes in the spatial structure of the city could be compared.

The primary contribution of a historical paper such as this is the bringing together of various bits and pieces of information on land settlement into one volume. It is limited, however, in that it does not reconstruct the city at different points in time on a completely comparable basis in order that systematic comparisons may be made to determine the manner in which the city grew. Certain basic comparisons can be made, however, to point out the changes taking place.

The small lots, especially in and around the Central Business District, encouraged the first families to settle close to the CBD. By living close together, they were able to have easy access to the CBD. Many of these old homes have since been converted into apartments and rooming houses. The first trolley and transit routes not only fostered residential development away from the CBD, but also promoted the growth of the first commercial zones outside the CBD. When these areas were later zoned commercial the way was paved for disorderly strip development along the major arterials.

The automobile has enabled Tacoma to spread out as can be seen by referring again to Figures 16 and 22. The rapid growth of Pierce County since 1940 is primarily due to the expansion of the Tacoma metropolitan area caused partly by natural growth and partly by new living patterns. These living patterns which include such things as one or more cars per family, single family home, each with its own lawn and patio, and the new freeway system help foster commercial and residential dispersion which is taking place in Tacoma today. Many desirable residential areas have grown on the outskirts and this trend continues as persons move out of the



obsolete homes in the older section of town surrounding the CBD. The new Tacoma Mall serves as an example of the changing living patterns and dispersion taking place in America. It is fully expected this retail facility with its ample parking area and new stores will cause a formidable drain on the already dwindling retail sales in the CBD.

If the Weyerhaeuser Timber Company moves its administrative offices from the CBD to another area in the city, this would add to the further decline of the CBD. The possibility of a move to another city on the part of Weyerhaeuser could cause a serious effect on the economic base in Tacoma since the firm is a major employer.

The removal of the toll from the Tacoma Narrows Bridge could induce a greater population growth on the to the west of Tacoma, especially around Gig Harbor, since this area is now easily accessible by an inexpensive commute.

Planning has had little effect on Tacoma to date and it is too early to tell what effect recent planning has had on the city. Tacoma, however, is an interesting model of a once highly concentrated western city of moderate size which is experiencing sharp changes in its spatial structure. This change is owing to population and physical dispersion because of the revolution in personal and goods transportation and rising levels of personal incomes, as well as shifts in the nature of its economic base.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### A. BOOKS

- Bergel, Egon E. Urban Sociology. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company Incorporated, 1955.
- Bergman, Hans. History of Scandinavians in Tacoma and Pierce County. Tacoma: H. Bergman, 1926.
- Burgess, Ernest W. (ed.). The Urban Community. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1927.
- Cooley, Charles H. Sociological Research and Sociological Theory. New York: H. Holt and Company, 1930.
- Firey, Walter. Land Use in Central Boston. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1947.
- French, A. Tacoma: The City of Destiny. Tacoma: Central News Company, 1903.
- Fieden, Bernard J. The Future of Old Neighborhoods. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1963.
- Handlin, Oscar and John Burchard. (eds.). The Historian and the City. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1963.
- Harvey, Paul W. Tacoma Headlines. Tacoma: Tacoma News Tribune, 1962.
- Hidy, Ralph W., Frank E. Hill, and Allan Nevins. Timber and Men. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1963.
- McKenzie, Roderick. The Metropolitan Community. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Incorporated, 1933.
- Mason, Allen C. Compendium of Information Concerning the City of Tacoma and Washington Territory. Portland, Oregon: A. Anderson and Company, 1888.
- Mayer, Harold M. and Clyde F. Kohn. (eds.). Readings in Urban Geography. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1959.
- Meany, Edmond S. Three Cities of Washington, Origin of Their Names. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1923.
- Mumford, Lewis. The Culture of Cities. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1938.



Northern Pacific Railroad Company. Tacoma, The Western Terminus of The Northern Pacific Railroad. Tacoma, 1887.

Park, Robert E., Ernest W. Burgess, and Roderick D. McKenzie. The City. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1925.

Presch, Thomas W. McCarver and Tacoma. Seattle: Lowman and Hanford Stationery and Printing Company, 1906.

Quiett, Glenn C. They Built The West. New York, London: D. Appleton-Century Company Incorporated, 1934.

Quinn, James A. Urban Sociology. New York: American Book Company, 1955.

Reps, John W. The Making of Urban America. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1965.

Sussman, Marvin B. Community Structure and Analysis. New York: Crowell, 1959.

Tacoma Narrows Bridge and McChord Field - Official Opening. Tacoma, 1940.

The Weyerhaeuser Timber Company. Men, Mills and Timber. Tacoma: Weyerhaeuser Timber Company, 1950.

\_\_\_\_\_. You and Your Company. Seattle: Metropolitan Press Printing Company, 1948.

#### B. BOOKS: PARTS OF SERIES

Bonney, William P. History of Pierce County, Washington. 3 Vols. Chicago: Pioneer Historical Publishing Company, 1927.

Hunt, Herbert. Tacoma, Its History and Its Builders. Chicago: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1906.

#### C. PUBLICATIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

Hoyt, Homer. The Structure and Growth of Residential Neighborhoods in American Cities. Federal Housing Administration. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1939.

Mayor's Research Committee on Urban Problems. Tacoma, The City We Build. Tacoma City Council. Tacoma, 1944.

Puget Sound Regional Planning Commission. Puget Sound Region, War and Post War Development. Washington: Government Printing Office, May, 1943.



Tacoma. Chamber of Commerce. The New Northwest and Tacoma, Its Metropolis. Tacoma: Puget Sound Printing Company, 1890.

\_\_\_\_\_. Tacoma Illustrated. Chicago: Baldwin Calcutt, 1889.

\_\_\_\_\_. Tacoma Statistics, 1965. Tacoma, 1965.

Tacoma. City Council. Tacoma City Charter 1953.

\_\_\_\_\_. Tacoma City Ordinance 7208. September, 1921.

\_\_\_\_\_. Tacoma City Ordinance 9147. April 7, 1927.

\_\_\_\_\_. Tacoma City Resolution 11977. March 4, 1946.

Tacoma. City Planning Commission. The CBD Plan, A part of the Comprehensive Plan for Tacoma, Washington. Tacoma: 1963.

\_\_\_\_\_. Renewal Areas. Tacoma, 1954.

\_\_\_\_\_. Site-History-Population. A Part of the Tacoma Master Plan. Tacoma, 1948.

\_\_\_\_\_. Official Zoning Map. Tacoma, 1945.

Tacoma. Department of Public Utilities. History and 1952 Report of the Tacoma Municipal Belt Line Railway. Tacoma, 1952.

#### D. PERIODICALS

Grey, Arthur L. Jr. "Los Angeles; Urban Prototype", Land Economics, Vol. XXXV, No. 3: 234-239, August, 1959.

Harris, Chauncy D. and Edward L. Ullman. "The Nature of Cities", Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 242: 12, November, 1945.

Hoyt, Homer. "Recent Distortions of the Classical Models of Urban Structure", Land Economics, Vol. XL, No. 2: 208-212, May, 1964.

#### E. ENCYCLOPEDIA ARTICLES

"Tacoma", Encyclopedia Americana, (1959), XXVI: 205-206.



## F. UNPUBLISHED MATERIALS

Citizens' Committee for Tacoma's Future Development. "Report and Recommendations." Unpublished report to the Tacoma City Council. December, 1957, Mimeographed.

Garrity, Donald L. "Tacoma, Washington", A Demographic and Ecological Analysis." Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Washington, Seattle, 1952.

McKean, Gertrude L. "Industrial Tacoma". Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Washington, Seattle, 1940.

Tacoma. Chamber of Commerce. "Harbor Development Committee Report". Unpublished report regarding the tideflats industrial area, Tacoma, September 20, 1937. Mimeographed.

\_\_\_\_\_. "History of Tacoma, Washington". Mimeographed.

Tacoma. Commercial Club and Chamber of Commerce. "1918 Activities" Unpublished brochure on the City of Tacoma. 1918.

Tacoma. Planning Commission. "Official Minutes".

## G. NEWSPAPERS

Ryan, Ella E. "Tacoma: Past, Present and Future", The Forum, December 21, 1907.

Tacoma Morning Globe, January 1, 1891.

Tacoma News Tribune, April 25, 1939, November 25, 1942 and August 25, 1959.

Tacoma News Tribune and Sunday Ledger, April 11, 1965.

## H. PERSONAL INTERVIEWS

Mr. Russell Buehler, Planning Director, City of Tacoma.

Mr. A. B. Comfort, Former Chairman of The Tacoma City Planning Commission.

Mr. Robert Eveleigh, Planning Director, Pierce County.

Mr. Murray Morgan, Noted Author.



710 Th14222



3 9352 02720901 4

NA9000 Th14222

AUP Closed Stacks

McConnell.

ARCHITECTURE



