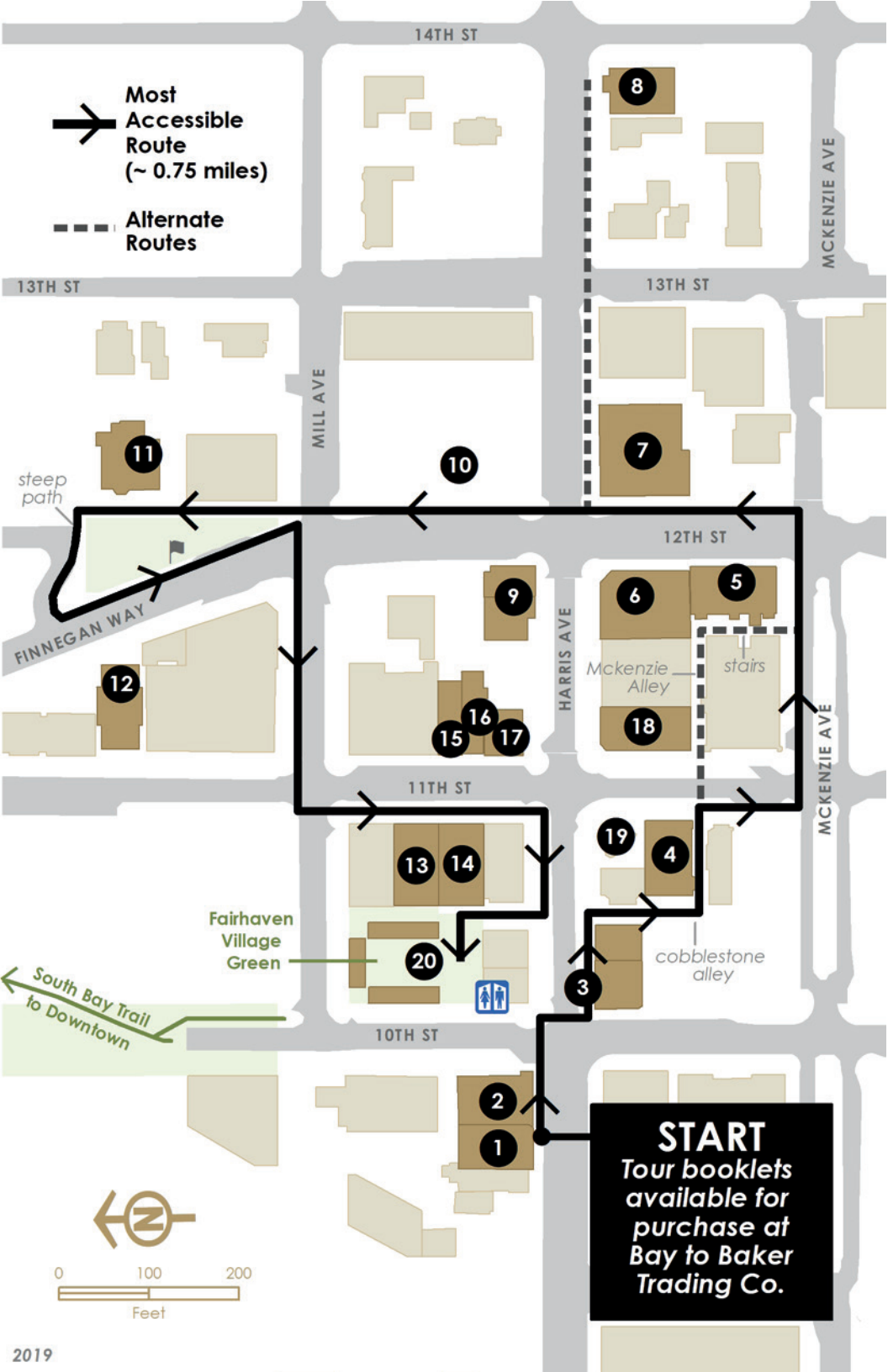
HISTORIC

WALKING TOUR

FAIRHAVEN



Bellingham, Washington


Most Accessible Route (~ 0.75 miles)
Alternate Routes
14TH ST
13TH ST
13TH ST
MCKENZIE AVE
MILL AVE
HARRIS AVE
12TH ST
11TH ST
10TH ST
MCKENZIE AVE
FINNEGAN WAY
steep path
Mckenzie Alley
stairs
cobblestone alley
Fairhaven Village Green
South Bay Trail to Downtown
START
Tour booklets available for purchase at Bay to Baker Trading Co.
0
100
200
Feet
2019

FAIRHAVEN HISTORIC WALKING TOUR

1. **Bellingham Bay Hotel**
2. **Schering Block**
3. **Morgan Block**
4. **Old Post Office**
5. **Waldron Building**
6. **Chuckanut Motor Company**
7. **Mason Block**
8. **Old Fairhaven Fire Station #2**
9. **Fairhaven Pharmacy**
10. **Fairhaven Hotel** (former site of)
11. **Fairhaven Library**
12. **Kulshan Club**
13. **Fairhaven Cash Grocery**
14. **Knights of Pythias Hall**
15. **Monahan Building**
16. **E.M. Day Building**
17. **Terminal Building**
18. **Nelson Block**
19. **Blonden Block** (former site of)
20. **Fairhaven Village Green**

HOW TO USE THIS TOUR

The tour starts at the Bellingham Bay Hotel (Site #1) and follows sidewalks and a few alleyways but occasionally travels over uneven ground, and has a few relatively steep slopes. The tour ends at the Fairhaven Village Green, Site #20.

Things to consider when walking:

- **Wear comfortable shoes and watch where you step!**
- **Always use crosswalks and be alert when crossing streets.**
- **Take breaks as needed.** Visit one of the many cafes and retail shops along the tour, stop by the library or have a picnic at the Fairhaven Village Green.



FAIRHAVEN HISTORIC WALKING TOUR

This photo-rich tour book gives a glimpse into Fairhaven's past, showing how it has evolved over time.

Settled in 1853, Fairhaven was one of four early towns that consolidated in 1904 to create the City of Bellingham. In the late 19th century Fairhaven experienced a series of booms and busts, in part due to anticipation by real estate investors who were led to believe that the town would become the terminus of the Great Northern Railroad. By 1890, Fairhaven was a thriving city and a worthy rival to its northern competitor, the town of New Whatcom (today's Downtown Bellingham). The boom busted, however, when Seattle was chosen as the terminus and the national Panic of 1893 and subsequent changes to liquor laws during Prohibition caused Fairhaven's vitality to wane. The historic buildings that remain today reflect the business of the well-heeled (banks, offices and hotels) along with the menial lodgings and entertainment activities (saloons, groceries and gaming houses) of the laboring classes who worked for nearby industries.

During the early 20th century Fairhaven boasted the city's most extensive deep-water frontage and proved to be ideal for manufacturing because of its access to coal and timber. Its lumber and shingle mills and large salmon cannery were among Whatcom County's prime industries.



View west from the Fairhaven Hotel, 1918. Photo by J.W. Sandison.

However, after the Second World War Fairhaven's population declined when business and industry shifted to downtown Bellingham. Old industrial wood buildings at the west end of Harris Avenue were demolished, and many other buildings stood vacant or underused. However, in the early 1970s Fairhaven experienced a renaissance when former resident Ken Imus returned and began purchasing and rehabilitating historic Fairhaven buildings. Another boost came in 1977 when the Fairhaven National Historic District was designated. The district was small, but included 17 historic buildings built between 1888 and 1929, several of which were given new life by Imus.

What remains today of Fairhaven's once thriving commercial center is a comparatively small core, but its community derives a strong sense of identity from its history. Since the 1980s, new mixed-use buildings have filled in vacant lots and an active business association has helped make Fairhaven what it is today — a vibrant destination to reside, shop, dine and celebrate.



1 Bellingham Bay Hotel

909 - 911 Harris Avenue
Built 1902

The Bellingham Bay Hotel was built in 1902, a time of renewed optimism as Fairhaven's economy was finally recovering from a decade of depression. The building followed the familiar model of two-storefronts at street level with furnished rooms above. One of the hotel's backers was Levi N. Griffin, the City of Fairhaven's last mayor. Early retail endeavors included a grocery store at 911 Harris and, at 909 Harris, yet another saloon. The bar's house draft was Leopold Schmidt's Olympia Beer, though that would soon be replaced with "3-B Beer" after Schmidt's new Bellingham Bay Brewery came online. The second floor housed the Bellingham Bay Hotel, later named the Hotel Bacona, which operated into the 1920s.



Anderson & Lind's Cash Grocery, 1905. Photo by Rembrandt Studio.

In 1972 the building was purchased by Fairhaven developer Ken Imus, who, for the next 30 years, used the building to warehouse his collection of architectural artifacts. Tim Imus, Ken's son, later renovated the building for ground floor retail and upper-story professional offices.



2019 photo.



2 Schering Block

913-915 Harris Avenue
Built 1903

A single-story wood building stood on this site until it was destroyed by fire in January 1903. It had housed the Elk Saloon and adjacent Elk Café. The lost building was owned by Charles Schering who had the current two-story brick building erected as a replacement. The Elk Saloon reopened in the popular corner space and served suds from Tacoma's Pacific Brewing & Malting Company. The Elk could boast its draft was "imported beer" since, after all, it was brewed in Tacoma. Next door was the Jenkins-Boys Co., housewares and furniture, at 913 Harris Ave. The Schering Block's second floor was designed as a meeting hall, which in the 1930s and 1940s was Croatian Hall, used for dances and celebrations by the large Slavic community of southside fishermen and their families. Ken Imus purchased and renovated the building in 1972. The corner storefront was the 99-seat "Fairhaven Cinema" from 1983 to 1989.

The Elk Saloon, 915 Harris Avenue, 1905. Photo by Rembrandt Studio.



2019 photo.



Levi "Louis" Swanson outside his Morgan House Bar, 1000 Harris Avenue, in the Morgan Block, 1905. Photo by Rembrandt Studio.

3 Morgan Block

1000 - 1002 Harris Avenue
Built 1890

Phillip and Mary Ann Morgan of Portland, Oregon, financed construction of the three-story Morgan Block in 1890. Designed by architect Jens Olsen, the wood frame building had a brick veneer applied to the Harris Avenue and 10th Street facades. The ground floor's two retail spaces were divided by a central stairway leading to the 20 residential rooms of the "Morgan House" on the second story. J.W. Hanson's high-end suit shop was the first tenant in the 1000 Harris storefront, soon replaced by the Morgan House Bar. Swedish immigrant Louis Swanson ran the saloon, his two brothers serving as bartenders.

Hard times left the Morgan House vacant by 1897, but industrious Louis Swanson triumphed and ended up owning both the bar and the furnished rooms upstairs. In 1905, the Morgan House was described as "one of the most attractive appearing hotels on the Bay." The Baltimore Oyster House and, later, Nick's Café occupied the 1002 Harris side. After the bar was closed by local prohibition, Louis turned it into a billiard parlor. However, the Great Depression struck the final blow and by the mid-1930s the building was empty. Remarkably, while so much of old Fairhaven was lost to fire and demolition, the Morgan Block survived the next three decades. In 1969, Good Earth Pottery opened in the building, shared as the first home of the Community Food Co-Op from 1970 to 1982, and in 1988, Artwood Gallery of fine woodworking moved in.

The Baltimore Oyster House and Restaurant, 1905. Photo by Rembrandt Studio.



2019 photo.

4 Old Post Office

1308 11th Street
Built 1905

During the 1890s, the west side of 11th Street between Harris and McKenzie was a "Devil's Row" of vice-infested saloons that included the Spokane, the Tontine, the Vineyard and, most disreputable, the Casino Theatre. John W. Roscoe was owner of the Casino, a dance hall bar with gambling parlor and stage for bawdy shows. "King Roscoe" paid whatever fines necessary to keep his den of "tramp acts and prostitution quarters" going. Fire and demolition purged 11th Street of the Casino and five other buildings between 1900 and 1905, leaving a scorched field from the Blonden Block (Site #19) south to McKenzie Avenue ready for redevelopment.

The building that stands today was completed in 1905 as a one-story, two-storefront brick building, an investment by banker Charles W. Waldron who was enjoying a brief rebound in fortune. The first tenant was J. G. Johnson's furniture store, and in 1913 the building housed a "paper bottle factory." Half the building would settle in as home to the South Bellingham Post Office for many years.

In June 1980 the building was damaged by fire, but was completely rehabilitated by Ken Imus' Jacaranda Development Company in 1985 using historic architectural elements salvaged from a building in Sacramento, California. The Glasserie, an art glass gallery, opened as the first tenant in the like-new vintage structure.



The building at 1308 11th Street wasn't much to look at by the 1960s. Photo by Gordon Tweit.

There was a party every night at the Casino Theatre, ca. 1890. Photographer unknown.



2019 photo.



5 Waldron Building

1308 - 1318 12th Street
Built 1891 - 1894
Listed in the Bellingham Local Historic Register

Charles W. Waldron, a banker from Michigan, paid for this substantial brick building to house his new Bank of Fairhaven in 1891. Following the Richardsonian Romanesque style, Waldron's first-floor bank was entered at the corner by a distinctive arch of Chuckanut sandstone. Commercial and professional offices were available upstairs. Originally a three-story structure, Waldron soon regretted he hadn't made it larger and ordered that a fourth floor be added. Work was underway when the economy began to sour and, to get the mortar to dry quicker, workers set out burn barrels along the new fourth floor. Unfortunately the building caught fire, and insurance paid for only partial reconstruction, leaving only the first and second stories usable. Waldron's Bank of Fairhaven failed in the nation-wide economic Panic of 1893.

Empty for decades except for a couple of 12th Street taverns, the Waldron Building found new life in 2006 when it was renovated by local developer David Ebenal, who created luxury condominiums on upper floors and commercial space at the street level.



2019 photo.



The Waldron Building in its original three-story format, ca. 1891. Photo by Roland Gamwell.

The Kulshan Tavern, a favorite of local southsiders from the 1930s until 1975, occupied the corner space originally built for Waldron's Bank of Fairhaven.



Chuckanut Motor Company, before the need for a traffic light at 12th and Harris, 1950. Photo by Galen Biery.

6 Chuckanut Motor Company

1112 - 1114 Harris Avenue / 1300 - 1304 12th Street
Built 1919

The Kulshan Motor Company opened in its new dealership and garage on the southwest corner of 12th and Harris in February 1920. The firm sold the Velie brand of autos that could run on low-grade fuel, "distillate or even kerosene efficiently." In 1924, the business was sold and renamed Chuckanut Motor Company, a gas station and service garage catering to the traffic generated by Chuckanut Drive.

In the early 1970s, Clifford and Phyllis McKee purchased and remodeled the building for use as retail shops and restaurants. The McKees renamed the building "Finnegan's Alley" in honor of Fairhaven pharmacist, George Finnegan, who was an investor in the Kulshan Motor Company back in 1919. Gallery West has been on the corner since 1972. Restaurants have included Venus Pizza at 1304 12th Street, from 1974 to 1994, and in the basement, The Fairhaven, entered from Harris Avenue.



The crew at Mike and George Monson's Chuckanut Motors, 1114 Harris, ca. 1930s. Photographer unknown.



2019 photo.



The Mason Block, ca. 1905, with Harris Avenue businesses (left to right): Wisconsin Grocery, O.D. Ames men's clothing, Grue & Dahl ladies' furnishings, and the Fairhaven Pharmacy. Photographer unknown.

7 Mason Block

1200 Harris Avenue
Built 1890

Allen C. Mason was encouraged to invest in Fairhaven by fellow Tacoma tycoon, Nelson Bennett. While his building was under construction, Mason was in Egypt climbing the Great Pyramid and touring temples along the Nile. Among the Mason Block's retail shops facing Harris Avenue were the posh Pacific Clothing Co. and proletarian Fairhaven Pharmacy. Upper stories held professional offices of doctors, dentists, lawyers and realtors. The top floor also housed the exclusive Cascade Club where well-polished members hosted their most famous guest, author Mark Twain, in August 1895.





The Mason Block in 1950. Remodeling in the early 1970s saw the 12th Street façade receive large display windows and an antique clock added to the corner. Photo by Galen Biery.



2019 photo.

The Mason Block was the first Fairhaven building to be renovated by Ken Imus, who purchased it in the early 1970s and named it the Marketplace. Ken's work showed what was possible and served as the impetus for the economic revival of Fairhaven.

In 1995 the building was renamed Sycamore Square and today is bustling with retail shops, restaurants and professional offices. The building that Allen Mason contributed to Nelson Bennett's boomtown has become the cornerstone of the Fairhaven Historic District.

8 Old Fairhaven Fire Station #2

1314 Harris Avenue
Built 1927
Listed in the Bellingham Local Historic Register

Fairhaven's fire protection in the 1890s relied on spirited hose and ladder companies made up of volunteers. Southside fire brigades kept their equipment in the Fairhaven City Hall, a small two-story brick building on Donovan Avenue. When the City of Bellingham introduced a paid fire department in October 1904, Fairhaven's former City Hall was hastily converted into fire Station #2 (Station #1 was downtown on Prospect Street). The building had room for a single firewagon and horse team, firefighters reaching the service bay from their upstairs loft by brass pole.

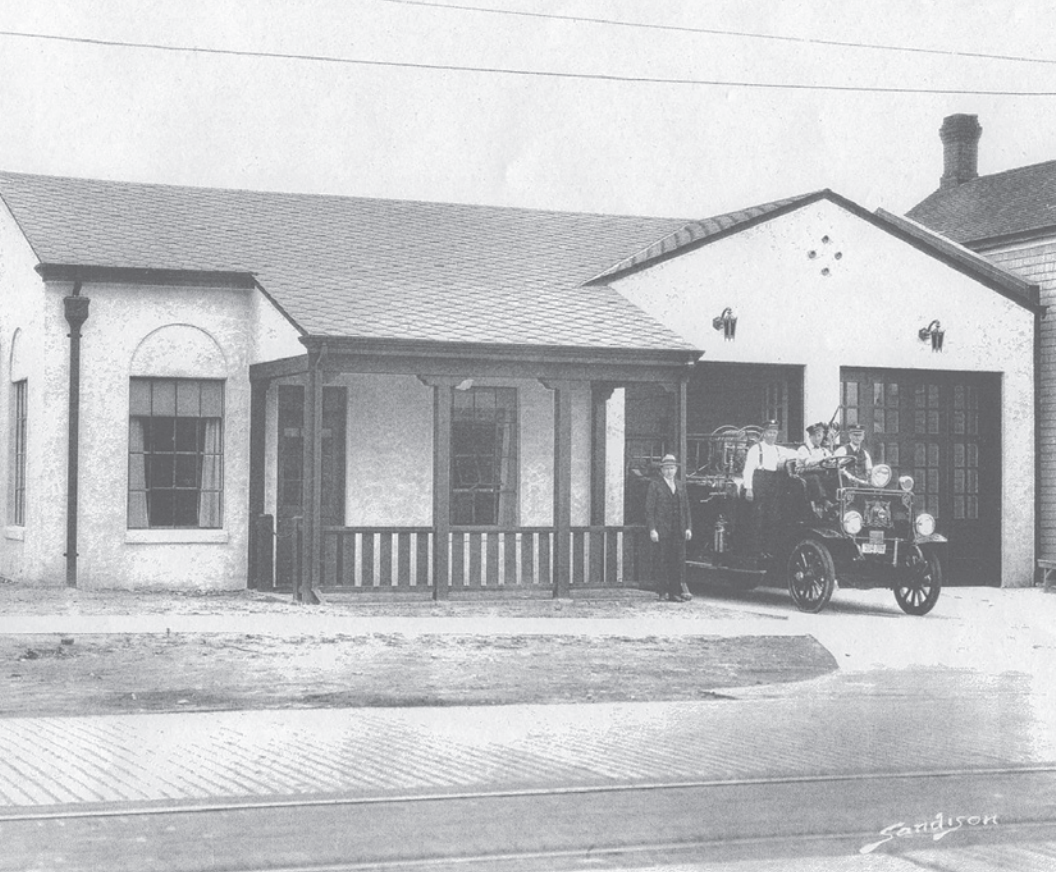
In 1927, a decade after motorized firetrucks became standard, a new Station #2 was built on Harris Avenue. Local architect F. Stanley Piper's design for the new station was meant to be unobtrusive, appearing as another "bungalow-type" residence in the neighborhood. The front office even had a working fireplace, creating a comfortable place to welcome the community. The land for the new station was donated to the cause by southside philanthropist Cyrus Gates. The Bellingham Fire Department's Station #2 served the southside until 2000, when a new station was built at 1590 Harris Ave. Sold by the City of Bellingham to a citizen entrepreneur, the old Station #2 opened as the Firehouse Performing Arts Center and Café in 2006.



Firefighters pose with two-horse hose wagon and Rex (the fire dog), ca. 1905, outside the first Station #2 in the former Fairhaven City Hall on Donovan Avenue. Photographer unknown.



2019 photo.



Bellingham Fire Department's new Station #2 in 1927.
Photo by J.W. Sandison.



9 Fairhaven Pharmacy

1115 Harris Avenue

Built 1929

The Fairhaven Pharmacy celebrated its grand opening in the new "Shopping Tower" on July 20, 1929. Both business and building were owned by druggist George Finnegan. The building, as George put it, was "the result of many years of planning by brainy men of artistic temperature." The drugstore, on the northwest corner of 12th and Harris, had entrances off both streets. Two additional commercial spaces, in step-down succession, fronted on the Harris Avenue side. Finnegan publicized the one-story building as "the shortest Shopping Tower south of Alaska" and being "50 feet high, 50 feet wide and 50 feet deep, if it ever blows over it will still be straight up."

George had prepared for construction by obtaining an "original Aztec horned toad" from an archaeological site "near the Texas border." The toad only needed to be fed once every 50 years, its heart beating at five-minute intervals, making it the perfect for placement in the tower's foundation. Word got out about Finnegan's plan to entomb the toad and outraged members of the Humane Society gave George a thorough scolding. Finnegan wasn't beyond compromise, altering his plan so that "the Horned Toad was placed on the roof instead of in the cornerstone" to afford the ancient amphibian a better view of Bellingham Bay.

Gordon Tweit, owner of the Fairhaven Pharmacy from 1962 to 1991, is fondly remembered for his photos, particularly of in-store trick-or-treaters every Halloween. He had his own community museum in the drugstore's basement. The historic pharmacy closed in October 2015.





Photo of Fairhaven Pharmacy, 1953. Note the stripped-down hulk of the Fairhaven Hotel in the background. Photographer unknown.



Fairhaven Pharmacy, ca. 1955. Photo by Gordon Tweit.



10 Fairhaven Hotel

Northeast corner of 11th Street and Harris Avenue
Built 1889, demolished 1956

The Fairhaven Hotel was completed in September 1890 for $150,000, the magnificent centerpiece in Nelson Bennett and C.X. Larrabee's bid to make Fairhaven the west coast terminus of James J. Hill's Great Northern Railway. Hill's railroad prize went to Seattle and Fairhaven's grand hotel became a symbol of failed ambition. Designed by Proctor & Dennis, Tacoma architects, construction was overseen by locals Longstaff & Black who added its signature tower. The elegant hotel measured 100' by 100', had 100 rooms and boasted every modern convenience: a hydraulic elevator, electric and gas lighting, huge candelabras, oak furniture with carvings and fanciful brass hardware, deep wind carpeting from Brussels, scenic paintings in wide golden frames and fireplaces topped by marble mantels. The dining room featured multi-course banquets served on elegant dinnerware by tuxedoed waiters. Serving pieces in silver were inscribed *The Fairhaven*.

Its most famous guest, author Mark Twain, in August 1895, did not care for the place due to C.X. Larrabee's no-alcohol policy. After closing in 1899, the Larrabee family were the sole occupants of the housekeeping portion of the building until 1914. In the 1920s the building was operated briefly as the Yogurt Sanitarium, a spa dedicated to digestion, and as the Hotel Victoria, with hopes of drawing Canadian tourists. Over the years, the building's whimsical design of decorative rosettes, Flemish gables, classical arches, and white verandas came to be viewed as pretentious and gaudy. The hotel's tower was removed in 1928. Purchased by Whatcom County in 1937, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) removed the facade's decorative elements and stuccoed over its red brick and Chuckanut sandstone to create a "modern" gray block. The building was used as the Fairhaven Community Center, home to the Boys & Girls Club, during its final 15 years. In July 1953, a fire gutted the structure and by 1956 the last debris was cleared away. In 2019, the site was redeveloped with a multi-story mixed-use building that references the lost hotel's architecture.



The Fairhaven Hotel in all its glory, September 1890. Photographer unknown.

11 Fairhaven Library

1117 12th Street
Built 1904
Listed in the National Register of Historic Places

The Fairhaven Public Library was built in 1904, the year Bellingham became "a city of the first-class" through consolidation of Fairhaven with its northern neighbor, Whatcom. Procuring the site and funding for the library consumed much of the Fairhaven City Council's final business. Andrew Carnegie, the great sponsor of libraries, bestowed the necessary $12,500 for the building. Fairhaven philanthropist C.X. Larrabee donated the site at 12th Street and Columbia Avenue, a precondition to qualifying for Mr. Carnegie's gift. Larrabee had his own stipulation: that the new library must have a "working men's reading room." Located in the basement, the men's reading room was entered through a door under the front stairs, so male laborers could avoid the embarrassment of being seen "in their working clothes" by ladies. Larrabee hoped the reading room would provide an after-work alternative to Fairhaven's abundant saloons.

The Fairhaven Public Library, 1904. Photo by J.W. Sandison.



2019 photo.



Designed by the Seattle firm of Elliott & West, the library was built with a basement of Chuckanut sandstone and a superstructure of brick. It turned out to be poor-quality brick that absorbed rain like a slow sponge posing a "constant danger of having the books, furniture and floors damaged by moisture." The remedy, in early 1910, was to coat three sides of the library with cement. Laura Shaw was Fairhaven Library's first librarian, a position she'd held since 1902 when the library was a reading room in the Mason Block (Site #7). In 1904, Shaw was described by the head of the Library Board as possessing "kindness of heart," yet certainly up to the task when "strict discipline must be observed and silence at whatever cost maintained." The top floor was designed with an auditorium for community events, accessed by an artistically-crafted stairway.

Main reading room, ca. 1904. Photographer unknown.



12 Kulshan Club



1120 Finnegan Way
(moved from 1127 12th Street)
Built 1909

Today's Seaview Apartments on Finnegan Way were built in 1909 as a clubhouse for the Kulshan Club, a businessman's lodge that had succeeded the old Cascade Club in the Mason Block. The clubhouse, designed in the Arts & Crafts style by William Cox and F. Stanley Piper, included a large dining room, which doubled as the membership's billiard room, and in the basement, a two-lane bowling alley. Located on the southwest corner of 12th Street and Columbia Avenue, the building was directly across 12th from the Fairhaven Library. In 1935, the WPA-funded "12th Street cut-off" required the former clubhouse be moved a block west, downhill, to its present location at 1120 Finnegan Way.

In 1943 the building was converted into "apartments for war industry workers" and following the war, was named the Seaview. In 1944 the short road linking 11th and 12th streets was named "Finnegan Way" in honor of George Finnegan, the late Fairhaven pharmacist, who was remembered for his wit and compassion.



The Kulshan Club and Fairhaven Library faced each other across 12th Street before construction of Finnegan Way in 1935 required the clubhouse to be moved. Photographer unknown.

Columbia Avenue side of the Kulshan Club, 1909. Note the planked sidewalks. Photo by J. W. Sandison.



The Kulshan Club's bowling alley, 1909. Photo by J.W. Sandison.



Fairhaven Cash Grocery, 1206 11th Street, ca. 1920.
Photo by Leslie R. Corbett.

Quick profits could be made during the Fairhaven building boom - in 1890 the Fairhaven Cash Grocery property was purchased for $2,500, and resold for $12,000 that same day.



13 Fairhaven Cash Grocery

1204-1206 11th Street
Built 1891

Constructed in 1891 as a one-story building, the Mayer-Smith Grocery Co. opened that year featuring "a large stock of staple and fancy groceries." Adams & Co. Hardware got its start here in 1900 before moving next door to the Knights of Pythias Hall (Site #14) in 1907. Anderson & Lind turned it back into a grocery store and were succeeded by Campbell & Brotnov in 1919, followed by Brown & Cole in 1923. Credit was offered to customers, many of whom were commercial fishermen whose work by nature was seasonal. It was Purley Atkins, Fairhaven Grocery's owner from 1948 to 1968, who invented the slogan inviting potential patrons from across town to come "Shop on the Sunny Side of Bellingham."

In 1973 Ken Imus purchased the building, adding a second story and renovating the exterior with new shop windows. Village Books, a longstanding Fairhaven icon, opened in the building in 1980 and in 1985 expanded next door to the Knights of Pythias Building. Village Books occupied the ground floor and basement of both buildings, sharing space with the Colophon Café. In 2004, Chuck and Dee Robinson, owners of Village Books, built and moved the business into a new building next door, still adjoining their sister company, Paper Dreams, which continues today in the Fairhaven Cash Grocery Building.



2019 photo.

14 Knights of Pythias Hall

1208-1210 11th Street
Built 1891

This substantial three-story building of sandstone, brick and iron was designed in the Richardsonian Romanesque style by local architects Longstaff & Black. On August 25, 1891, Fairhaven's Knights of Pythias dedicated their new "Castle Hall" on 11th Street with grand speeches and songs. One awestruck reporter described the event as "one of those enjoyable never-to-be-forgotten occasions that we poor mortals seldom have the pleasure of participating in while journeying through this wilderness of sin and sorrow." Over the years, the Knights shared their hall with the Masons, Elks, American Yeomen, Modern Woodsmen and United Workmen. The first floor and basement, through eight decades, saw a series of hardware stores including G. A. McIntosh, Adams & Co., Groom Hardware and Al's Promart. Village Books was in the building from 1985 to 2004.

The upper floors of the Knights of Pythias Hall sat vacant for more than half a century, its last occupant being B.W. "Chip" Groom, who had a second-floor apartment in the building until his death in 1963. The honorary "Mayor of Fairhaven," Chip had been a co-founder of Adams & Co. Hardware & Plumbing.



The Knights of Pythias Hall, the year Adams & Co. Hardware & Plumbing moved into the first floor and basement, 1907. Photo by J. Wayland Clark.



15 Monahan Building

1209 11th Street
Built 1890

Irish immigrant Thomas E. Monahan came to Whatcom County in 1883 and established his first saloon, the Board of Trade, near 10th and Taylor streets in Fairhaven. When Fairhaven annexed old Bellingham in 1890, Monahan moved closer to the action, opening on Feb. 1, 1891, in his new two-story brick building on 11th Street. No mossback, Monahan was elected to the Fairhaven City Council and served several terms. In later years his sons, Tom and Hugh, became proprietors of the bar as the senior Monahan took up a chair on the Park Board. The Monahan Bar was for epicureans of the hard stuff and advertised as "Headquarters for Fine Old, Soft and Mellow Liquors." Thomas E. Monahan passed away in 1909. The building was home to the Fairhaven Pharmacy in the 1920s and, in the 1950s, Frank Austin's shoe repair. In 1973, the building was converted into a movie theater, "The Picture Show," which operated there until 1990. Fairhaven Runners has been in the building since 1999.



Old man Monahan's place, 1209 11th Street, 1905. Photo by Rembrandt Studio.

Monahan Building with Reliable Shoe Repair and, next door, Pluto's Tavern in the E.M. Day Building, Oct. 1972. Photo by Galen Biery.



16 E.M. Day Building

1211 11th Street
Built 1890

Built during the building boom of 1890, the one-story E.M. Day Building was originally a wood structure that housed two separate offices. Edwin Mahalon Day was one of the early tenants of the building, having moved to Bellingham Bay from the Midwest in 1890. A publisher and an attorney, E.M. Day was involved in many local ventures and achieved prominence as Judge Advocate General of Washington. Day occupied the building from the early 1890s to 1907.

In 1899, the building was sold to blacksmith John E. Tierney who later occupied the building, combined the two offices and sold cigars. In 1928, Tierney added brick to the front and side walls of the building, and added a billiard parlor to his cigar and fish tackle business.

The building has undergone changes in tenants over the years, with Dirty Dan's restaurant occupying the building since 1974.





E.M. Day Building, 1211 11th Street, 1905. Photo by Rembrandt Studio.



2019 photo.

17 Terminal Building

1101-1103 Harris Avenue
Built 1888-1889
Listed in the National Register of Historic Places

Completed in 1889, the Italianate style Terminal Building is Fairhaven's oldest surviving commercial structure. Denny Butler's Sideboard Saloon, "one of the first respectable liquor houses opened in Fairhaven," and George Pierce's barbershop, working in tandem, were early tenants of the two ground-floor retail spaces.

The dry ballot of 1910 closed all the bars in Bellingham, so William Hapner turned the former Sideboard into a grocery store. In 1923, John Finnegan made it the Busy Corner. John was the older brother of George Finnegan, the Fairhaven Pharmacy's good-humored proprietor, and their two businesses were also related. The Busy Corner was not an apothecary, but sold school supplies, toiletries, cigars, magazines and other drugstore-associated sundries that wouldn't fit into the cramped Fairhaven Pharmacy. The Busy Corner's soda fountain was a favorite hangout for Fairhaven High School students, as well as those waiting for a trolley downtown or to Happy Valley.

After John's death in 1930, Will Berthiaume ran the business for the next 20 years as the Terminal Store. Tony's Coffee has occupied the popular corner at 1101 Harris since 1971.



2019 photo.







View from the Morgan Block up Harris Avenue across 11th Street, May 18, 1934. In the distance, across 12th, the Fairhaven Hotel stands vacant, its ornate tower having been removed in 1928. Photo by Galen Biery.

The Terminal Building prominent in the background, Fairhaven celebrated Independence Day with a street fair in 1900. Photo by Herman Wahlstrand.





18 Nelson Block

1100-1102 Harris Avenue / 1305-1307 11th Street
Built 1900

An attempt to build on the southeast corner of 11th and Harris began in 1891, but Malcolm McKechnie's proposed three-story structure only got as as far as the basement and foundation before running out of money. In 1900, James P. Nelson, flush with cash from selling salmon traps, purchased the property and enlisted architect William Cox to design the two-story Italianate style commercial building you see today. The first-floor corner space was designed to house the Citizen's National Bank, hence the word "BANK" carved in stone over the entrance.

The basement was originally the tonsorial emporium of John and Richard Sharpless, barbering brothers with perhaps the worst surname possible for men who made their living via scissors and straight razor. Starting in 1970, the Nelson Block's subterranean habitat briefly hosted counter-culture coffeehouse "Toad Hall" as a hippie hang out. It last found use as Speedy O'Tubb's Rhythmic Underground, a music venue from 1988 to 1995. The band Nirvana played there on November 23rd, 1988.



The Nelson Block in 1950. Photo by Galen Biery.



The bank staff, 1905. Photo by Rembrandt Studio.

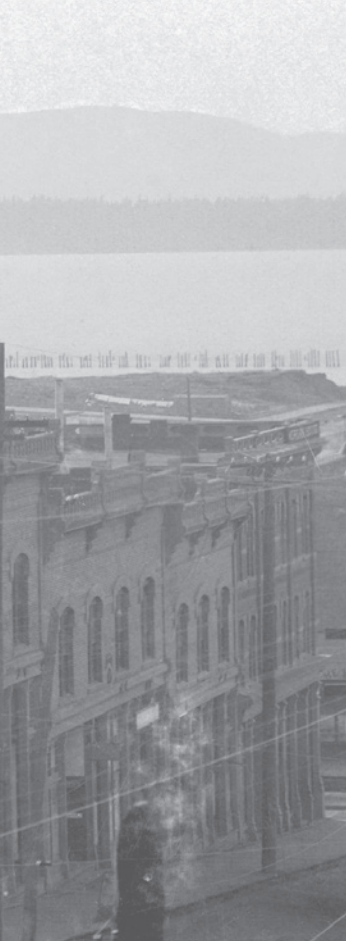


19 Blonden Block

Southwest corner of 11th Street and Harris Avenue
Built 1890, demolished 1950

Rasmus O. Blonden, Danish immigrant and resident of Lynden, Washington, was an early investor in Fairhaven. He bought property in 1883 directly from Daniel J. Harris (a.k.a. "Dirty Dan"), including the site of the Blonden Block, which he'd have built in 1890.

The Blonden Block was a three-part building that stair-stepped down Harris Avenue in three successive sections. The complex consisted of no less than 10 storefronts on the first floor, with furnished rooms of the Commercial Hotel on the second.



The Blonden Block, early 1900s. Photo by Albert A. Martin.



2019 photo of the corner where the Blonden Block stood..

Most distinctive, the two-story building's three-story tower at 11th and Harris was crowned with a dome. Prestigious real estate firm Riedel & Moffat had that corner office during the boom years. Architect Jens Olsen, who designed the Blonden Block, also created the Morgan Block, meaning the entire south side of Harris from 11th down to 10th Street was his work.

The Blonden Block never quite had its day. Initial triumph was cut short by the Panic of 1893, followed by the exodus of businesses to the north side after consolidation in 1904. Storefronts turned over frequently, many remaining vacant. The Great Depression and war years left the building neglected and all but empty. It was torn down in 1950.

20 Fairhaven Village Green

Corner of Mill Avenue and 10th Street
Built 2003

Fairhaven is fortunate to have a city park at its center – the Fairhaven Village Green. In 2001 a group of nine citizens collaborated to renovate and improve the Green, which at that time was a grassy plot behind the Knights of Pythias Hall and the Fairhaven Cash Grocery building.

Improvements to the Fairhaven Village Green were funded by the Bellingham Parks Department who purchased the property, and by donations raised by selling engraved bricks, paving stones and benches to citizens to raise funds. The Green was dedicated on April 26, 2003, and today hosts festivals, public dances, Saturday night summer films, bocce ball tournaments, musical events, art and antique shows and provides a year-round space for people-watching and general relaxation.

Several sculptural pieces have been added to the Green over the years, including the Dirty Dan Harris Bench, created by Robert McDermott in 2003, and the historic Tulip Fountain created in 1923 by Knute Evertz. Evertz created five tulip fountains in the 1920s for Bellingham to celebrate the early 1900 tulip bulb industry in Whatcom County. One of these fountains was located in Fairhaven at the corner of 11th and Harris, in front of the Terminal Building. The Fountain in the Village Green was originally located in Whatcom Falls Park.



Photo by Kenni Merritt, 2018.



NOTES

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Cover photo: View from the Morgan Block up Harris Avenue across 11th Street, May 18, 1934. Photo by Galen Biery.

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