



A BRIEF HISTORY OF GOLD BAR

The early Indian residents in the vicinity of what is now Gold Bar, known as the Skykomish, were a subdivision of the Snohomish Peoples whose region was the Snohomish River Basin extending from the mouth of the river to the crest of the Cascades. Their annual living and travel patterns centered around hunting, fishing, and plant gathering seasons. Shelters during gathering seasons were temporary pole and mat or brush shelters. Permanent villages occupied during the winter months were large cedar plank houses.

The first white men to explore the Gold Bar area were probably fur trappers, traders and prospectors. The first recorded visit to the Gold Bar area occurred in the years 1859 and 1860 when survey parties sent out by the developers of Snohomish town site traveled up the Skykomish Valley. Convinced that a trail leading from the Eastern Washington gold fields, across the Cascades and down the Skykomish and Snohomish river valleys would benefit their proposed town, the promoters of Snohomish determined to establish such a route. It was in the course of locating this trail that the survey parties passed the future site of Gold Bar. Beyond locating Cady Pass, the trail project was a failure.

In 1890, Mr. Andrew Haggerty bought timber from the settlers and logged the area about Gold Bar. In 1892, he gave the Great Northern Railroad land for a right-of-way, with the idea that the company would build a freight terminal. This plan did not materialize for twenty years.

Gold held an interest for many and a prospector named Boyce is said to have found traces of gold in the Skykomish River. He hired Chinese laborers for \$1 per day. With equipment made of wood, the Chinese dug out a big hole, using a dredge built on a float. This was east of town, across the railroad tracks from Clancey's Motel. Each worker took enough gold from the river to enrich their employer by about \$3 per day and to cause the locality to be named Gold Bar.

An early historical account of Skagit and Snohomish Counties published in 1906 gives this description of the town's early history:

Gold Bar is a thrifty sawmill town of between two and three hundred people, in the Skykomish Valley along the overland line of the Great Northern Railway, twenty-nine miles east of Everett. Platted September 18, 1900, by the Gold Bar Improvement Company, it has grown very rapidly and is now among the substantial villages of the County. A two-story schoolhouse has been erected in which forty-three pupils receive instruction, besides which the town enjoys good telephone, telegraph and transportation facilities. As the timber lands become available for agricultural purposes, many small farms are coming into cultivation, thus furnishing additional support for Gold Bar. Last year 886 cars of lumber and shingles were shipped from this point, which is indicative of the town's volume of business. The Gold Bar Lumber Company operates an extensive lumber and shingle plant there.

By 1900, the settlement of Gold Bar boasted two houses. Mr. O.S. Lewis built a small mill and cookhouse as well as more homes. The mill was just beyond the McDaniel Garage (now a mobile home park). The millpond was on the shore of May Creek and the bunkhouse and camp was across the creek. At one time, 300 men were employed by the Gold Bar Lumber Company, as the mill was called. About 100 of this number were Japanese, who did all the common labor. They lived across May Creek at what was called Jap Town.

Mr. Lewis donated two blocks of land on Lewis Street to the town for a school and additional land for a church. In 1901, a one-room school was built and by 1903 the teacher, Mrs. Flint, had more than thirty pupils. The church was built and dedicated in 1907. The first pastor was Reverend J.M. Wilder, of the Methodist Church.

In 1904, Mr. Lewis and his partner sold the Gold Bar Lumber Company mill and some timber to a Mr. Barnett from Alaska and a Mr. Johansen. Between 1904 and 1908, the company built several homes for employees. A Mr. Croft built a large hotel at the corner of First and Railroad Avenues. Behind the Hotel a large building, called the Annex, was built, as was the Croft Building down the street. The mill men, who ate their meals at the Croft Hotel where five women served family style meals, used these buildings. Mr. John R. McKay built the post office and general store in 1906. The town also boasted a saloon, another hotel, and a dance hall.

In 1910, the town was incorporated, with Mr. W.H. Croft as its first Mayor. A water system was constructed and business began to improve in Gold Bar. The depot was built and the round house and freight yards finally became a reality. More businesses were built, including a two story commercial hotel and restaurant, a clothing store, a butcher shop, a drug store, real estate office, barber shop, pool hall, a Chinese restaurant, a garage, greenhouse and a theater.

In 1914, the roundhouse was moved to Skykomish and Gold Bar started to become a ghost town. In 1916 it was returned and things improved once again. Along the right-of-way from Second Street to Eighth Street, could be seen snow shed timbers, notched in sets in Gold Bar, ready to set up at the snow sheds on the Great Northern route. By 1922,

streets were graded and sidewalks built. Then the roundhouse was moved again to Skykomish, this time for good. The trains continued to stop for mail and passengers, but little else.

After the railroad moved the roundhouse to Skykomish and the mill closed down, many were out of work. In addition, within a short period of time, there were about fifty fires. The Croft Hotel, the Annex, the Valley Supply store, as well as other homes and businesses, were destroyed. Fire drills were held at the High School, where students left rooms by way of canvas chutes fastened at each window. A 36" triangle on a pole was hit with a metal hammer to call the firemen to a fire. A two-wheeled cart with a hose wrapped around it was used after city water was available.

Between the years 1920 and 1970, the population of Gold Bar remained around three hundred. In 1933, the high school closed because there were not enough students. Gold Bar kids attended the Sultan High School from then on. In the 1950's, the trains stopped using the depot.

The 1970's saw an increase in population of about two hundred citizens; the 1980's brought an additional increase of about three hundred. By 1990, the official population of Gold Bar had reached 1,078.

The 1990's had seen a phenomenal increase to the population of this small northwest town and the geographic area has doubled due to annexations. Gold Bar has become a bedroom community for Snohomish and King counties. The population for 1999 is estimated to be at least 1,800. By the end of the year, it may reach 2,000.

Approaching the millennium, Gold Bar is looking forward to an exciting future. Plans are underway for an expanded and remodeled City Hall; a third turn lane on Highway 2 all the way through town; a new grocery store; possible future commercial development; and many more projects to enhance living in the City of Gold Bar.

The Council and Staff invite all citizens to participate in the future of our great little city.