

## **Julius Harold Bloedel 1864-1957**

The Fairhaven boom was shattered, in 1891, when it was decided to make Seattle the terminus of the Great Northern. The reaction from the high tide of speculation was severe and was accentuated by the hard times which followed throughout the nation during the '90s. But while many of the stranded Fairhavenites met the changed conditions simply by bemoaning their fate and filling the columns of the local papers with doggerel attacks upon J. J. Hill and C. X. Larrabee as the authors of all their misfortunes, there were a few brave spirits who "carried on" and who, in time, wrested victory from defeat, not only for themselves but for the lasting welfare of Whatcom county and the cities of Bellingham bay. Among these men was J. H. Bloedel, and during the dark days, from 1891 to 1898, the Blue Canyon Coal Mining Company, with its associated railroad and lumber interests, formed almost the only ray of hope to a panic stricken community; and since those days the industry in which he has played so large a part has been a constant and perhaps the largest factor in the growth and prosperity of Bellingham.

Mr. Bloedel was born at Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, March 4, 1864, a son of Henry and Helen Bloedel. While still an infant, death deprived him of a mother's love and care, and he was reared in the home of his aunt at Sheboygan. Here he passed his younger days, graduating from the high school, and finally entering the University of Michigan, at Ann Arbor, with the class of 1885. Even before graduating from this institution he had entered the real estate business at Sheboygan, thus earning his way through the university. He remained in Sheboygan until 1889, when the great prosperity of the west attracted him, and his first visit to the Pacific coast took him to Tacoma where he had friends and acquaintances. The Fairhaven excitement was just beginning. There was good ground for the belief that it was to be the terminus of the Great Northern and a city of large importance. Mr. Bloedel went to Fairhaven in September, 1889, found it good, returned to Wisconsin to close up his affairs and made Fairhaven his home in March, 1890. His first work was as manager of the logging interests of the Samish Lake Lumber & Mill Company, of which J. F. Wardner was the principal stockholder.

Mr. Wardner was a miner more than a lumber man, and an organizer rather than a manager of business institutions. Within a few months he had interested Mr. Bloedel in a prospect which developed into the Blue Canyon coal mine. One claim was purchased from Clarence W. Carter, and a second claim was filed upon by Mr. Bloedel. The claims were involved in litigation, which was finally decided favorably to the Wardner-Bloedel interests, and they at once began the work of development. Mr. Bloedel invested almost his entire capital in the undertaking, in which he had great faith, as the coal seemed abundant, and the quality has never been surpassed on the Pacific coast. Accordingly, when Wardner sold his interest to what was known as the "Montana syndicate," of which Governor S. T. Hauser, John T. Murphy, A. M. Holter, M. E. Downs and Peter Larson were members, Mr. Bloedel retained his interest, resolved to make the mine a success. The sale to the Montana capitalists was made in July, 1891, and they secured J. J. Donovan, whom they had learned to know and trust through his work as assistant chief engineer of the Northern Pacific Railway, to represent their interests.

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It was in old Fairhaven, in October, 1898, that J. H. Bloedel and Miss Mina Prentice, of Saginaw, Michigan, were married, and it was there that they lived for many years, forming ties of friendship which never can be broken. Three children have come to bless their home; Prentice, Lawrence and Charlotte.

J. H. Bloedel is one of the best informed men in the lumber industry on the Pacific coast. When knotty problems arise, he is one of the first called on for counsel. He is a man of great energy and business capacity. In his business ventures he has shown that rare combination of daring, tempered with good judgment, which spells success. And with it all, so his Bellingham friends are fond of telling, he is the same, unassuming, kindly friend that he was when all Fairhaven and Whatcom dug clams together in the panic days of 1893.

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