

Weber Point



The bunkhouse picture is "Courtesy Issaquah History Museums, Neg. 2005.1.18"

Weber Point, located on the eastern shores of Lake Sammamish in the northern part of the city of Sammamish, is today (2006) an upscale residential development. But early in the 20th century Weber Point was a different scene, with two active shingle mills as well as a small community which was known as Sammamish.

The First Sammamish

Before there was Sammamish there was... Sammamish.

The first Sammamish slowly developed around 1900 on what is today known as Weber Point. The town was never platted; in its heyday in the 1910s its population perhaps reached 50. Yet it did have a railroad stop (the 1913 *Polk's Oregon and Washington Gazetteer*, a business directory, listed it as a "flag station on the railway"), two operating shingle mills at one point, a building that was a bunkhouse, cookhouse, company store and office all in one, and about a dozen or so families that considered Sammamish to be home. Today we know this same area as Weber Point.

Although many people living in Sammamish 90 years ago considered themselves Sammamish residents, Sammamish was technically a precinct of the Inglewood community. The 1910 United States Census recorded it as such, and various *Polk's Directories* in the early 1910s referenced Sammamish as part of Inglewood. Even Sammamish - area telephone numbers in the 1917 Seattle telephone directory are shown as being located in Inglewood. Moreover, Inglewood had a post office while Sammamish did not—although this post office was called "Sammamish Station". Inglewood was located about a mile and a half south of Sammamish.

Lumber and Shingles

The Lake Sammamish Lumber and Shingle Company was incorporated on December 17, 1892 by Frank Winqvist, A.C. Hilan, Sam Yates and Denis Stake with \$6,000 capital. A mill was built on the point and got off to a fast

start: in 1893 it produced 7,350,000 shingles. The mill operated for several years, but burned between 1896 and 1898 and did not reopen.

“Sammamish” first appeared on an early U.S. Department of Interior Geological Map as a stop on the line of the Northern Pacific Railway (Snoqualmie Branch) that snaked along the eastern shore of Lake Sammamish. Although the map was dated 1895, it was actually a later update of the 1895 map. While the year of the update was not shown on the map, the railroad was noted as “Northern Pacific Railway,” and it operated under that name only between 1901 and 1906. There does not seem to have been an actual train depot in Sammamish—the town never was really large enough to justify it—but there was a loading platform, and students later boarded the train there to go to school in Redmond.

In 1898 Joseph Weber (1863?-1937) came to the site and chose it for his future shingle making business. But he did not move his operations there immediately. Weber, originally from Ohio, had opened his first mill in Snohomish County in 1890, and ran it for 10 years. In 1901 he came to his new mill site on the point.

Weber rebuilt the mill and named it the Lake Sammamish Shingle Company, more commonly known as Sammamish Shingle Company; some also called it Weber’s Shingle Mill or Weber’s Mill. The company was incorporated on September 10, 1901 by Weber, Henry McClure, and R.M. Castle. Although he served as president and manager of the company, Weber was not the sole owner.

Weber’s Mills

The first mill was located right on the tip of the point, but between 1901 and 1907 Weber built a second mill, which was located closer to a short spur on the railroad track that was built to accommodate the boxcars for operations at the mills.

The mills produced up to 100,000 shingles (primarily cedar) daily. Cedar logs were often floated in the inlet at Weber Point until they were ready to be cut. When they were, men with sticks similar to harpoons guided the logs toward a chute which would automatically catch the logs and carry them into the mill to be cut into shingle bolts.

Making Things Happen

The company grew, and so did the little community of Sammamish. By the early 1910s a company store, cookhouse, bunkhouse, dock and a few company homes had sprung up. And Weber was busy making more things happen. In addition to managing his growing mills and company store, for several years in the early 1910s he was the postmaster of the “Sammamish Station” in Inglewood. It got to the point to where he needed more help.

In 1914 Weber hired William Quackenbush to be his bookkeeper and manage the store. Quackenbush's then 8 year old daughter, Margaret Quackenbush Breedman (1906-1993), would later record her memories of life in early 20th century Sammamish in a short book, "Rememberings."

Quackenbush's store and office were in the same building as the bunkhouse and kitchen. There was also a dining room in the building, and Breedman wrote that the cook -- at least during her time in Sammamish -- was "Chef Seigel." But Quackenbush bought all the food for the commissary as well as groceries for the store (he was also Sammamish's grocer).

The town continued to grow and the mills continued to prosper during much of the 1910s. The 1915-1916 Lumber Worker's Employment Guide listed as of November 1915: "Sammamish Shingle Co. Two shingle mills, 2 block in one and two 2-block in other. In town, employment 40 all told. Board \$0.50, bunks good. Pay 5th and 20th, union wages."

Happy Times

Breedman recalled a happy, relatively peaceful time in her Sammamish. But mill accidents did happen, and serious illness was more of a risk than it is today: at one point most of the six children in the Quackenbush family came down with smallpox, a highly contagious disease. Breedman recorded that the family was quarantined and a "small pox" quarantine sign was put outside the door of their home.

But there were carefree times as well. Halloween was celebrated in the 1910s. According to Breedman, tipping over outhouses in Sammamish was a particular favorite with Halloween pranksters. (Most—if not all—of the houses in Sammamish in the 1910s did not have indoor plumbing. "Two holer" outhouses were the norm.) A more preferred form of recreation, at least in warmer weather, was Weber's Beach. It was a popular spot for swimming and beach parties in the summer.

And in spite of its relative remoteness and small size, Sammamish did not escape world events. Breedman wrote that at one point during the First World War (1917-1918) Joseph Weber stood on the front porch of his house and gave a speech exhorting Sammamians to step up to their patriotic duty and buy as many Liberty Bonds as possible.



The shot of the two women at the "Samamish" depot is "Courtesy Issaquah History Museums, Neg. 2005.1.14"

The Twenties and Beyond

Children in Sammamish caught the train, walked or rode by horse and buggy (or automobiles after about 1915 or so) to school in Redmond. Breedman graduated from Redmond High School in June 1923 as part of the first graduating class of the "new" high school, now known as the Old Redmond Schoolhouse.

The first mill closed soon after 1915, though the building remained at the tip of the point for some time after. Meanwhile Sammamish and its remaining mill seem to have maintained reasonably well through most of the 1920s, although perhaps with a gradual decline: the 1925-1926 Polk's "Oregon and Washington Gazetter" (another business directory) listed a number of small communities in eastern King County, but not Sammamish. At the same time the directory showed Inglewood's mail going to Redmond; the "Sammamish Station" of the Inglewood Post Office was no longer listed.

But Sammamish still showed up on a 1924 State of Washington Automobile Club map, and Clarence Bagley's 1929 History of King County said that Weber's Shingle Company "is still doing a good business, employing from 30-40 men." The little community carried on as the 1920s ended, but big changes loomed.

Changing Times

By 1930 most of the trees near the eastern shore of Lake Sammamish had been logged, with the main focus of logging operations shifting as far east as Beaver Lake and beyond. Also by 1930 the Great Depression was underway, having begun in October 1929. The mill was significantly impacted by the resulting economic slowdown as well as the diminished supply of cedar trees around the mill. Weber was forced to close the Lake Sammamish Shingle Company in December 1930.

By the mid-1930s Weber had sold his land, and it was quickly subdivided, although Weber's home, built in 1895, still stands. He moved to Seattle, where he died in September 1937 at age 74. His obituary in the *Seattle Daily Times* said that he was "one of the first shingle manufacturers in the state of Washington," but it would probably be more accurate to record that he was one of the early shingle manufacturers in the state as opposed to one of the first.

Sammamish seems to have quickly faded away with the departure of Weber and the mill. The railroad spur into the community was taken out in 1935, and the Quackenbush family moved about the same time. Sammamish disappeared, only to be reincarnated over 60 years later in a 21st century community with its own unique identity.

Phil Dougherty

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Sources:

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(<http://www.iinet.com/~shs/weber.html>); Phil Dougherty, interviews of Eric Erickson, June 13, 14, 17 and 22, 2006, Sammamish, WA