

Blaine

People and Place

Location

Blaine is on Drayton Harbor at the northernmost edge of the Puget Sound, just south of the U.S.-Canada border. Situated in Whatcom County, the city encompasses 5.5 square miles of land and 3.0 square miles of water. The nearest major U.S. city is Seattle, a 111-mile drive south. Blaine's geographic coordinates are lat 48°59'38"N, long 122°44'45"W.

Demographic Profile

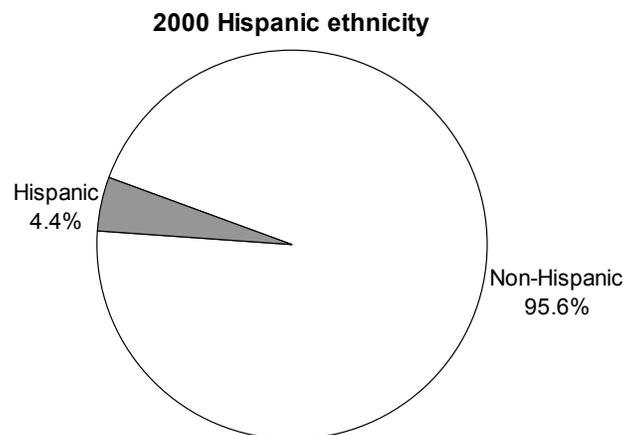
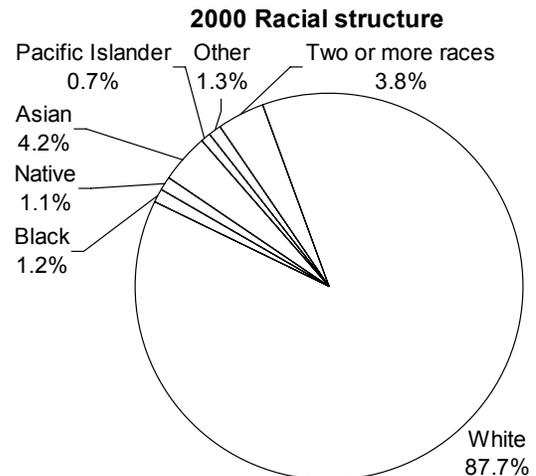
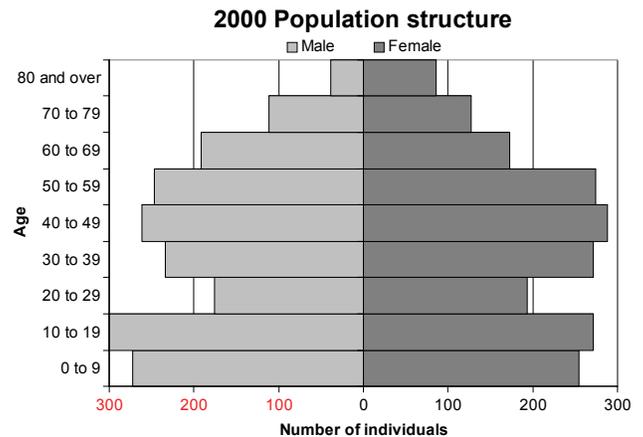
According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Blaine's population was 3,770, a significant increase from 2,489 in 1990. The gender composition was 51.4% female and 48.6% male. The median age of 38.6 years was above the national average of 35.3. The age structure in Blaine demonstrated usual population trends for a community without a major tertiary education provider. Of the population 18 years of age and older, 80.6% had a high school education (including equivalency) or higher, 20.7% had earned a bachelor's degree or higher, and 8.2% had attained a graduate or professional degree; the national averages were 79.7%, 22.3%, and 7.8% respectively. For 28.2% a high school degree or equivalent was the highest level of educational attainment.

The vast majority of Blaine's racial structure recorded by the 2000 U.S. Census was white (87.7%), followed by Asian (4.2%), people who identified with two or more races (3.8%), people who identified with another race (1.3%), black (1.2%), American Indian and Alaska Native (1.1%), and Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander (0.7%). Ethnicity data indicate that 4.4% identified as Hispanic. In 2000 19.3% were foreign-born, with the majority from the Americas outside of the United States, followed by people from Europe. Of the people identifying ancestry, most were German, English, or Irish.

In 2000 84% of Blaine's population lived in family households.

History

At the time of the first European settlement, more than 1,000 native people lived in Whatcom County utilizing forest and marine resources. Whatcom (meaning "noisy waters") County, derived its name from the sound of a waterfall at the mouth of Nooksack Creek. Initially known as Semiahmoo, Blaine was already an



ambitious settlement by 1858, although it was not incorporated until 1890. The initial name came from the tribe of Salish Indians who inhabited the Semiahmoo Bay area at a time when commercial interests attracted proprietors and European American settlers. Blaine was officially settled in 1856, corresponding with the U.S. Boundary Survey Commission's survey of the 49th parallel. During the falls and winters of 1857–1859, soldiers were stationed in the area to complete the construction of the boundary line. Within a few years, the town had begun to prosper significantly from outfitting gold miners heading north to the Fraser River in British Columbia. Blaine was the site of Whatcom County's first salmon cannery, built in 1881, which later became the Alaska Packers Association. Reaching a productive peak in the 1950s, the cannery eventually was sold and, indicating the economic changes at the turn of the century, is now the current location of a four-star resort.¹

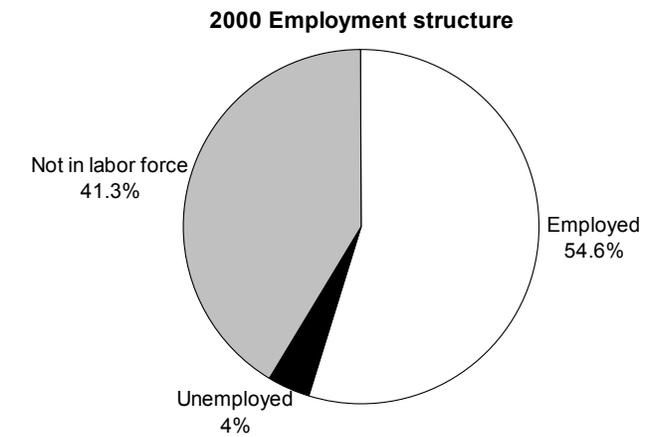
Prior to this recent stage of the immediate area's history, the Semiahmoo people dominated the region from Boundary Bay to the north and Birch Bay to the south. A 328-acre reservation now runs along the international border. During the mid-1800s, Snokomish people who survived the devastating smallpox epidemics joined the Semiahmoo, subsequently making the Semiahmoo heirs to the Snokomish territory.² The Semiahmoo belong to a group of tribes called the Straight Salish, a division of the Coast Salish. The Straight Salish are distinguished from their neighbors through their unique language and their most important subsistence practice, reef-net fishing during annual salmon runs. Distinct from smaller mobile nets and traps used for stream fishing by their neighbors to the north and south, the elaborate reef nets were used by the Semiahmoo in saltwater channels off the southern shore of Vancouver Island in British Columbia and the San Juan Islands.

Infrastructure

Current Economy

At the time of the 2000 U.S. Census, 54.6% of Blaine's potential labor force 16 years of age and older were employed, 4% were unemployed, and the unemployment rate was 6.9% (calculated by dividing the unemployed population by the labor force). In addition, 41.3% were not in the labor force, compared to the national average of 36.1%. The major employment sectors were education, health, and social services (15.2%), local, state, and federal governments (14.4), retail (14.3%), and manufacturing (11.3%).

Blaine's economy was historically based on natural resource extraction industries. While the agriculture,



fishing, and timber sectors have declined in the latter part of the twentieth century, they remain strong elements of the county's contemporary economy. Although the annual average income in agriculture, forestry, and fishing industry combined is lower than the statewide salary average, the fishing, hunting, and trapping industry has typically offered the highest average salaries in the county. However in 2000 only 77 people participated in that industry.³

Since 1970 the number of jobs in the county has increased by 275% compared to a statewide increase of 245%, although this trend shows signs of reversing in recent years. The largest proportion of new jobs has been in trade and services, due largely to periods of particularly favorable rates of exchange between U.S. and Canada currencies.⁴

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the per capita income in 1999 was \$20,333 and the median household income was \$36,900. In 1999 15.5% lived below the poverty level, higher than the national average of 12.4%. In 2000 there were 1,737 housing units in Blaine, with 57% owner occupied and 43% renter occupied. The housing unit vacancy rate was 14%, with 45.6% vacant due to seasonal, recreational, or occasional use.

Governance

The City of Blaine has a council-manager form of government. There are seven elected city council members who appoint a city manager. The city manager is responsible for the efficient administration of all city government, including appointing the heads of the city departments. Whatcom County, including Blaine, levies an 8.3% sales tax and a 4% lodging tax. See the Governance subsection (page 43) in the Overview section for a more detailed discussion of taxes affecting fisherman and processors in Washington.

The nearest National Marine Fisheries Service Regional Office and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services District Office are in Seattle. Meetings of the Pacific Fishery Management and North Pacific Fishery Management councils are routinely held in the Seattle-Tacoma area. The nearest Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Regional Office is 93 miles south in Mill Creek. Blaine falls within the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) Station Bellingham's area of responsibility, which includes the San Juan Islands north to the Canada border and south to Admiralty Inlet. The USCG works in close partnership with the Canadian Coast Guard and is occasionally involved in international search and rescue and law enforcement operations. The Bellingham station (21 miles south) was established in 1947 and maintains six vessels.

Facilities

Blaine is accessible by ground, sea, and air. Blaine is located on the Interstate 5 corridor (north-south). The nearest major east-west highways are Interstate 90 (in Seattle) and Canadian National 1, approximately 50 miles north in Vancouver, British Columbia. Amtrak's Cascade Corridor Service provides national and international rail passenger service. The Blaine Municipal Airport, a small airport with self-service facilities such as fueling and tie-down, is nearby. The Bellingham Airport is the nearest facility offering passenger service. Vancouver (British Columbia) International Airport and Seattle-Tacoma International Airport are the nearest major facilities.

The Blaine School District has two primary schools, one elementary school, one middle school, and one high school. The City of Blaine provides water, sewer, storm water, and electrical services. The Blaine Police and Fire departments administer public safety. St. Joseph's Hospital, Whatcom County's only major medical facility, is in Bellingham. The tourism industry in Blaine is well developed with numerous hotels and motels.

Blaine Harbor, managed by the Port of Bellingham, serves as a U.S. port of entry. The newly renovated harbor has nearly 600 state-of-the-art boat slips for commercial and pleasure boats. The harbor provides year-round permanent moorage, more than 700 feet of visitor moorage, and several marine service facilities including marine supply stores, a fueling dock, portable pump-out stations, and new concrete floats. The harbor also offers a public meeting room, waterfront trails, restaurants and a complimentary shuttle service into town, free parking, and 24-hour onsite staff.

Involvement in West Coast Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

There were at least two seafood processors operating in Blaine in 2000, Boundary Fish Company and Sea K. Fish Company. Of the 471 unique vessels that delivered landings to Blaine, 236 were commercial vessels, 165 were tribal commercial vessels, and 70 were for personal use. Reported landings were in the following West Coast fisheries (data shown represent landings in metric tons/value of said landings/number of vessels landing): crab 581 t/\$2,637,349/192; groundfish 2,026 t/\$1,301,259/26; highly migratory species confidential/confidential/1; salmon 375 t/\$898,579/177; shellfish 2 t/\$6734/9; shrimp 2 t/\$15,790/9; and other species 174 t/\$462,062/39.

Blaine residents owned 41 vessels in 2000, including 22 that participated in the federally managed groundfish fishery. The number of vessels owned by Blaine residents in 2000 participating in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic 4/1/0, crab 23/2/0, groundfish 26/0/NA, highly migratory species NA/0/NA, salmon 30/0/0, shellfish NA/0/NA, shrimp NA/0/0, and other species 14/0/0.⁵

Five Blaine residents held four federally managed groundfish fishery permits in 2000. The number holding permits in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic 3/1/6, crab 24/0/0, groundfish 7/0/1, highly migratory species NA/0/0, salmon 46/0/0, shellfish 0/0/NA, shrimp 2/0/0, and other species 2/0/0.⁶

Available data indicate that 271 state and federal permits were registered to Blaine residents in 2000. The number in each said fishery by state (WA/OR/CA) was: coastal pelagic 3/1/141, crab 38/0/0, groundfish 27/0/0, highly migratory species NA/0/0, salmon 52/0/0, shellfish 0/0/NA, shrimp 2/0/0, and other species 2/0/1.⁷

The tribal commercial fishery also plays a significant role in the local fishing industry. The Lummi Natural Resource Department has offices in nearby Bellingham encompassing several divisions including Natural Resource Harvest Management, Shellfish Operations, and Water Resources. The Shellfish Operation provides a sustainable shellfish program through the sale of oyster and clam products using the shellfish hatchery, Lummi Island Sea Pond, and tribal tidelands.

According to the Boldt Decision,⁸ in addition to several reef-net locations (i.e., Orcas, San Juan, Lummi, and Fidalgo islands, and near Point Roberts and Sandy Point), the usual and accustomed fishing places of the Lummi Tribe at treaty times included the marine areas of northern Puget Sound from the Fraser River in British

Columbia south to the northern outskirts of Seattle (as they existed in 1974), and particularly Bellingham Bay. Freshwater fisheries included the river drainage systems, especially the Nooksack River, emptying into the bays from Boundary Bay south to Fidalgo Bay.

Sportfishing

In 2000 there was at least one salmonid charter fishing operator in Blaine. As of May 2005, two licensed agents were selling fishing permits in Blaine. In 2003 there were 5,332 sportfishing license transactions in Blaine valued at \$66,342.58.

In Catch Record Card Area 7 (San Juan Islands) the 2000 sport catch, based on catch record cards, was 7,178 fish, including 4,495 Chinook salmon, 2,644 coho salmon, 21 chum salmon, and 18 sockeye salmon. Marine anglers made 30,627 trips to the sport salmon fishery. Boat-based anglers caught 5,897 bottomfish in Area 7. The recreational harvest of clams (lbs) and oysters (#) for Area 7 in 2000 was estimated to be 115,273 and 0 respectively; harvest occurred over an estimated 19,752 user trips.

Subsistence

Subsistence hunting, fishing, and gathering activities are fundamental to the way of life of some coastal community members. Tribal and nontribal individuals participate in subsistence fishing. Today members of the Lummi Tribe and other nontribal subsistence fishermen obtain fishery resources from the waters surrounding Blaine. Subsistence fishing is not discussed in great detail in this community profile due to the lack of available data.

Involvement in North Pacific Fisheries

Commercial Fishing

In 2000 Blaine residents owned 22 vessels involved in North Pacific fisheries. Community members landed fish in the following North Pacific fisheries (data shown represent landings in metric tons/value of said landings/ number of vessels landing): Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) groundfish confidential/confidential/1; other finfish confidential/confidential/2; Gulf of Alaska (GOA) groundfish 2,513 mt/\$898,440/4; halibut confidential/confidential/2; herring confidential/confidential/1; salmon 3,621 mt/\$1,709,500/18; and shellfish confidential/confidential/2.

In 2000 Blaine residents held 50 state and federal registered permits, including 12 individuals who held state permits and 30 who held federal permits (note: it is possible for individuals to hold more than one permit

simultaneously). Blaine residents held five groundfish License Limitation Program permits. Community members held 6 BSAI groundfish, 4 halibut, 5 herring, 26 salmon, and 2 shellfish Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission permits. Residents held 273,967 halibut individual fishing quota shares.

Blaine residents held 64 crew member licenses for North Pacific fisheries in 2000.

Sportfishing

Blaine residents purchased 54 Alaska sportfishing licenses in 2000. That year there was one sportfishing business in Blaine that participated in Alaskan fisheries.

Notes

1. History of Blaine. No date. City of Blaine. Online at <http://www.ci.blaine.wa.us/> [accessed 31 January 2007].
2. The Territory of the Semiahmoo People. No date. The territory of the Semiahmoo. Online at <http://members.shaw.ca/j.a.brown/Territory.html> [accessed 31 January 2007].
3. Whatcom County Profile. 2001. Whatcom County profile. Online at <http://www.wa.gov/esd/lmea/pubs/profiles/whatcom.pdf> [accessed 31 January 2007].
4. See note 3.
5. NA refers to data that were not available, for example, due to few or no recorded permit numbers, or the partially permitted nature of a fishery in 2000.
6. See note 5.
7. See note 5.
8. Center for Columbia River History. No date. Boldt Decision. Online at <http://www.ccrh.org/comm/river/legal/boldt.htm> [accessed 31 January 2007].