

APPENDIX A

THURSTON COUNTY HISTORY

NATIVE AMERICAN OCCUPATION

Salish Indian groups, ancestors of tribes now known as Nisqually, Squaxin Island and Chehalis Confederated Tribes gathered shellfish and frequented the inlets and prairies of Thurston County centuries before Euro-American exploration and settlement. The rivers of the County were long-established sites for salmon harvesting, the prairies of the county were popular hunting and plant harvesting sites, and the beaches were replete with shellfish, harvested by native peoples.

The open prairies provided a variety of the foods which were used by the Coastal Salish including bunch grasses, violet, camas, shooting star, sedge, kinnikinnick, mosses, lichens, bracken fern and salal.

The Nisqually are descendants of the Southern Coast Salish who lived in the Nisqually River Basin, on nearby prairies and along the beaches of Puget Sound for generations. They were traditionally more concentrated in the lower basin where several permanent houses were located. The oldest known village is over 5,000 years old. During the spring and summer months they ranged widely for food gathering and processing. Their name comes from "squalli," the grasses that grew in the lowland prairies, and they were the "Squalli-absch", "people of the grass country and the river."

The Nisqually were signatories of the Medicine Creek Treaty signed on December 26, 1854. The Indian War of 1855-56 and an Executive Order of January 20, 1857 reduced the tribal holdings. The 3,300 acres of reservation lands in Pierce County were condemned when Fort Lewis was established in 1917. The Nisqually adopted their constitution in 1946.

Historically, the Chehalis Indian people occupied a large area within the Chehalis River watershed, stretching from the foothills of the Cascade Mountains to the Pacific Ocean in Southwest Washington. The tribe has been located on a reservation within the Chehalis watershed since the 1850s, though important historic and archaeological sites are scattered throughout the tribe's aboriginal area. "Chehalis" is a collective name for several Salishan tribes that lived on the Chehalis River and its affluent, and on Grays Harbor. Two principal groups of the ancestors of the present Chehalis Confederated Tribe were the Salish peoples of the Lower Chehalis, who relied on sea resources and the Upper Chehalis who had a river-based economy. The Chehalis did not sign a treaty but by executive order in 1864 land was set aside for a Chehalis Reservation. The Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation was formed and approved by the federal government in 1939 and its constitution was amended in 1973.

The Squaxin people are a Southern Coast Salish people who traditionally lived in the forests and waters of southern Puget Sound and depended upon the fish, shellfish, animals and plants of that area for their economy. The Squaxin Island Reservation was established under the Treaty of Medicine Creek in 1854. The Squaxin tribal ancestors were confined to Squaxin Island during the Indian War 1855-56 and dispersed after the war. The tribe was organized in 1934 and adopted its Constitution in 1965.

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The first Euro-Americans to come to Thurston County were part of the British Vancouver Expedition under the command of Captain George Vancouver. Lt. Peter Puget, a member of the Vancouver Expedition and Vancouver explored the southernmost tip of Puget Sound in 1792. They returned to the mother ship The Discovery disappointed that they had not found the Northwest Passage. In 1824, another British expedition left Fort Astoria to explore the territory between the Columbia and the Fraser River. James McMillan led the party up the Chehalis River to the Black River. From there they followed the Indian portage routes through Black Lake to what is now Tumwater and then to Eld Inlet.

The first non-Native American settlers were the Hudson's Bay Company who began their northwest operations in 1824, and in 1829 moved their primary headquarters to a location near the Columbia River at Ft. Vancouver. The Hudson's Bay Company established several large farming areas in Thurston County including areas near Hawk's (Tyrell's) Prairie, near Yelm and at Tenalquot near Rainier. The company's primary operations in our area were at Ft. Nisqually, near present day Northwest Landing and a large farm just east of the Nisqually River in present day Pierce County.

In 1841, American Lt. Commander Charles Wilkes and his party of explorers were the first Americans to officially explore the region. His expedition mapped and named landmarks throughout the region. Members of his expedition lent their names to Budd, Totten, Henderson and Eld Inlets of Puget Sound in Thurston County. Wilkes traveled by water and also overland probably following pre-established Indian and Hudson's Bay trails.

The first permanent non-Native American settlers settled in Thurston County in 1845. Part of an overland train from Missouri, the Michael Simmons/George Bush Party determined to go northward from their wintering-over place on the Columbia River at Washougal that year. They were spurred to go north because the Oregon Provisional Government had passed laws excluding Negroes—whether they were slave, free, or of mixed race—from settling in Oregon. The punishment for men if they did not leave the Oregon Country within two years was whipping. George Bush, prominent member of the party was a man of mixed race as were his children. The party selected a site at the falls of the Deschutes near Puget Sound at New Market (what is now Tumwater), thus creating the first permanent American settlement on Puget Sound and in Thurston County in 1845. Seven others and their families who were with the party settled within a radius of six miles on the prairies around Tumwater. During 1846-47 they set up a gristmill and sawmill at the site utilizing the water power of the falls at Tumwater.

The Simmons/Bush party opened a flood-tide of settlement in the county and succeeding years brought more and more American settlers taking claims on the natural prairies and riverine areas around the county. The prairies had been periodically burned off by Indians to keep open land for camas and other root foodstuffs. The Skookumchuck River, Nisqually River, Scatter Creek, Black River, Deschutes River and Chehalis River all drew the early American settlers to their fertile banks.

American settlers also took advantage of the federal Donation Land Claim law, which granted large tracts of land—up to 640 acres—to those staking claim before 1850, and less acreage to those arriving before 1855.

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On January 12, 1852 Thurston County was created in the then Oregon Territory. Olympia was designated as county seat that same year. In November 1853 Washington became a separate territory from Oregon, and Olympia was designated as the temporary (made permanent in 1855) capital city. Thurston County, originally to be called Simmons County, in honor of Tumwater-area pioneer Michael Simmons, was named for Samuel Thurston when it was created in 1852. He was the first delegate to Congress from the Oregon Territory. He died in 1851 while on his way home from the nation's capital.

In the winter of 1854, newly appointed Territorial Governor Isaac Stevens negotiated his first treaty in the territory for removal of the Indians to reservations, clearing the title to land for new settlers. This Medicine Creek Council was held just north of what is now I-5 on the Nisqually Delta in December, 1854. The Nisqually, Squaxin Island, Muckleshoot and Puyallup peoples signed the Medicine Creek Treaty, ceding their rights to 2.5 million acres of Western Washington tribal lands in exchange for the guarantee of reservation lands and hunting and fishing rights. The Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis have never signed a treaty with the United States and were awarded reservation lands in 1864 by Executive Order.

The actions of the treaty coupled with increased settlement brought Native Americans and settlers into conflict resulting in the Puget Sound Indian War of 1855-56. Settlers gathered in blockhouses, pioneer log fortifications that became small towns during the period. Farming and development were at a standstill until the conclusion of the war in later 1856.

Early on, county settlers formed their own schools. Some of the earliest schools in the territory were located in Thurston County near Lacey and at Olympia.

Michael T. Simmons in 1849 was named the first postmaster in what was to become Washington. The post office was at Nisqually and later moved to Olympia in 1850. Other early post offices were located at Jamestown (near Grand Mound) in 1859, and at Coal Bank, later known as Tenino, in 1860.

Olympia was the prominent town on Puget Sound for many years into the 1860s as the territorial capital city. Olympia was also the location of the first newspaper of the territory and served as the Port of Entry for Puget Sound by the U.S. Custom's Service from 1851-1854.

The 1870s were the era of the railroad. The Northern Pacific Railroad reached Tenino in 1872, then known as Coal Bank, and made that town the hub of activity for southern Thurston County. The town of Tenino was platted in 1873. By the 1870s, Tumwater had developed rapidly along the falls of the Deschutes where many manufacturers were located earning it the title of "Lowell of the Pacific," referring to the industrial development in Lowell, Massachusetts. But both Olympia and Tumwater were by-passed by the mainline of the Northern Pacific Railroad when it was built through the county in 1873.

In 1873, three settlers--William Buckley, Samuel Colter and J. B. David-- selected a site for a railroad depot and christened it BUCODA after their own names. The railroad also ran through Yelm in 1873 and new stores and businesses sprung up along the tracks. Developers were hoping for a railroad out to Puget City on Johnson Point in 1870 when the townsite was first platted.

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In 1879 the first territorial prison opened at Bucoda. In that same year, Thomas Rutledge applied for a post office and moved a large mounting rock into his front yard. Rutledge received the post office but was denied the name “The Rock” for the location and instead designated the area “Little Rock.”

By the 1880s logging and industry increased throughout the county and new areas of settlement opened up. By 1889, 40 logging camps operated around Thurston County. New mills and settlers were at South Union, Independence and Bucoda. In southeast Thurston County, logging was underway at Lake Lawrence in 1892 and at the Shore Shingle Mill nearby. Loggers were also active around Summit Lake during the period.

The Nisqually area was known as Maxfield during the 1880s, after the McConnell’s who operated a hotel there. By 1887 the prison closed at Bucoda but in that same year Northwestern Coal Mine began operation at Bucoda and in 1888 a lumber mill was operating. In Tenino, the sandstone quarrying industry began in the 1880s and was in full swing by the decade of the 1890s.

With the advent of Washington Statehood in 1889, numbers of Thurston County communities were platted and began to be served by railroads, inevitably bringing development. Rochester was platted in 1890 by John L. Nye and Fred Sarjent. Sam Woodruff platted Gate in 1890. Fred and George Stocking platted the town of Grand Mound in 1890 as well.

The town of Littlerock was platted in the 1890s when a move was on to change the name of Littlerock to Viora. The Tacoma, Olympia and Grays Harbor Railroad came through the town in 1890 and a store and hotel were built to accommodate the traffic. With the coming of the railroad through Nisqually in 1891, it too was platted as a townsite. Although there were scattered settlers already in the area, a group of developers from Binghampton, New York, platted the town of Rainier in 1891 with big hopes for new development which fizzled but the town retains its New York-inspired street names. Olympia retained its title as capital of the new state and instituted wide-ranging improvements such as street cars, electricity and new stone and brick business blocks.

When Washington became a state in 1889, provisions were made to enable the purchase of tidelands for oyster production. As early as 1853 settlers began appreciating the qualities of the oyster. Indians often sold oysters to settlers and by 1868 a brisk trade with San Francisco in Olympia oysters was under way. Beginning about 1890 the native population of bivalves was augmented through oyster cultivation. Oyster boats and rafts for harvesting and washing became common. In 1900 oystermen began damming the natural tidelands to create more, extensive beds for oyster culture. The high point of oyster production occurred in the 1920s. Eventually, native stocks were depleted by pollution from nearby pulp mills and Japanese Pacific oysters were later introduced.

In 1891 Woodland officially became known as Lacey and in 1893 construction began on the first buildings of St. Martin’s College in that locale. The school officially opened in 1895. In Olympia, the county built a new courthouse in 1891 fronting on Sylvester Park. The grand, towered Romanesque building was later sold to the state and is known as the Old Capitol. After the sale to the state in 1901, the county built a new courthouse at the corner of 4th and Washington downtown.

The first years of the 20th century were an era of continued development throughout the county. The Bordeaux Brothers built the Mumby Mill at Bordeaux in the Black Hills in 1902. The Mud Bay

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Logging Company also commenced logging after 1900 in the Black Hills. The post office at Delphi was established in 1900, with the influx of Mud Bay loggers. At Independence, the Finnish and Swedish Lutheran residents each built Evangelical churches, the Swedish in 1902, and the Finnish in 1909. With the coming of the railroad—the Union Pacific and Milwaukee in 1908--a depot went up. The site of Independence became known as Helsing Junction named for the homeland of many residents at Helsinki.

By 1900 Rochester was a boomtown with a hotel, stores and a livery stable located along railroad tracks. In 1907 the Maytown Mill began operations springing up in an area that railroad men were unsure was going to become a town. According to some accounts, this is how the area got its name—a maybe town.

After a fire in 1902, the Mutual Lumber Company in Bucoda was re-built and resumed full operations. In 1907 the Washington Union Coal Co. a subsidiary of Union Pacific Railroad initiated its mining operations at Tono (a shorthand name for “Ton of Coal”).

Tenino, probably named for a Salish word meaning “junction,” incorporated in 1906 and was equipped with modern telephone and electrical utilities. The retail section of the town burned in 1906 and was rebuilt with sandstone buildings to illustrate the uses of the Tenino sandstone. The townsite of Boston Harbor was developed in 1907.

In 1907 the Milwaukee Road extended its rails from Tacoma through McKenna to Maytown and Centralia, and later south to Grays Harbor. As the railroad line was built, timberlands were tapped and every small town along its tracks boasted a mill or logging operation. The Point Defiance Line of the Northern Pacific Railroad line cut across the county in 1916. In the 1920s a new logging area opened up at Vail in the south county and a new rail line from the Vail operations to Henderson Inlet was built.

Along with lumber mills came the threat of fires. Yelm, Rochester, Bucoda, Rainier and Gate all suffered major fires. Communities rebuilt, and new mills took the place of the earlier manufacturing facilities which were often where the fires originated.

Although the inlets of Puget Sound had long been popular summer camping sites, with the creation of new roads for automobile travel, permanent homes were built in these areas in the early 20th century. At Butler Cove, prestigious homes were built in 1920s in conjunction with the golf course and country club. The 1920s were also a period of expansion around the lakes of the county when residents could travel by automobile to local resorts.

In the 1920s, community groups formed in many areas of the county including Rignall Hall at Hunter’s Point, the Friendly Grove Community, and at Freedom Hall (later Spurgeon Creek Grange). Many of the granges in the county were built during the 1920s including the Prosperity, Skookumchuck and Violet Prairie buildings, and still other granges took over schoolhouses after school districts consolidated.

At Gull Harbor, German immigrants settled to work in the area in the teens and 1920s. At the Sunnybay Plantation near Gull Harbor, the Olympia Cannery, located on the Olympia waterfront,

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developed a fruit ranch. In Grand Mound and Rochester, the strawberry fields were creating a brisk business during the 1920s as well.

The state established Primary State Highways starting in 1913. The concrete Pacific Highway (State Route 1), which began at the Canadian border and extended through Thurston County on its way to the Oregon border, was completed in 1922. The Olympic Highway (the route from Olympia to Port Angeles which was later State Highway 9) was designated as a primary highway in 1919. Tenino was on the main auto route transforming the town into a service stop with lunch counters, auto dealers and service stations.

During the 1910s and 1920s many Swedes and Swede-Finns emigrated to the county, working often in the lumber camps but slowly clearing the cut-over forest lands of the county into productive farmland. Many Swedes and Swede-Finns settled in the Independence Valley.

The depression of the 1930s affected Thurston County as it did most of the country. The county did benefit from a number of projects of the Franklin Roosevelt administration to promote building and jobs. The county built a new courthouse in 1930 on Capitol Way to replace the 1900 era building downtown. The Olympia Airport terminal and other improvements for the airfield were completed through Works Progress Administration funds. Throughout the county roads were built, records re-organized and public facilities were improved through various programs. Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camps near Lacey and Rainier were organized as well. Millersylvania Park was constructed through the work of the CCC. In Tumwater, the repeal of Prohibition spurred the construction of the new brewery in 1933. Upon its closure in 1932, a Tenino Bank issued wooden scrip, which became world renowned.

By the 1940s most of the lumber had been cut from the Black Hills and the operations of the Mud Bay Logging and Bordeaux Brothers had left the area. During World War II, several training areas were located in the county including at the Olympia Airport. The 37th Fighter squadron was part of the 55th Fighter Group between July 22, 1942 and August 23, 1943 at the site. The squadron began flying P-43 Lancers and later converted to P-38 Lightnings. The squadron had 180 enlisted men and 35 officers based at the airport. After the war, the airport was a site for surplus military aircraft. The airport was transferred back to the City of Olympia in 1947. Other military groups practiced blowing up bridges by dynamiting the logging trestles in the Capitol Forest, since they were no longer needed for logging. On the Olympia waterfront, steel barges were built on West Bay drive and materiel for the war effort was shipped through the Port of Olympia.

A flotilla of Navy ships, the "Mothball Fleet" as it was known, anchored off Gull Harbor from March 1946 to June 1972. The ships were used during the Korean War and Suez Crisis in 1956. Some of them were used as a storehouse for wheat beginning in 1953 and ending in 1959.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the new interstate highway system was built through the county redirecting traffic away from Nisqually, downtown Olympia, and Tenino. The new roadway also sliced through historic Tumwater, resulting in the razing or moving of most of the town.

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During the 1950s, a lawsuit by Olympia business people mandated that the headquarters of state agencies be located in Olympia—which has been interpreted to mean the larger Olympia, Lacey and Tumwater areas--spurring growth in state government and employment in the county.

In 1960s, Thurston County became the site of a significant impetus on the part of the treaty tribes to re-assert their fishing rights granted through the Medicine Creek Treaty of 1854. Frank's Landing near the Nisqually River was the site of national news throughout the era as tribal members asserted their fishing rights. The Boldt Decision by Federal Judge George Boldt upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1973 guaranteed these rights.

Despite the decline in the traditional industries of logging and quarrying, the county has experienced significant growth, increasing from a population of 55,049 in 1960 to over 214,000 in 2004.

Lacey was incorporated in 1966, the newest town in the county and that same year the first of the area shopping centers, South Sound Center opened there. Newer areas of development include those around the lakes and bay shores where waterfront homes have been constructed in such areas as Johnson Point and Cooper Point.

The development of The Evergreen State College in the 1960s encompassed a large area of southern Cooper Point. Yelm has grown significantly through the influx of population and development. Growth around freeway interchanges in areas like Grand Mound have become a trend of development. In 1977, the county built a new courthouse complex on the west side of Olympia.

In 1990, the state instituted the Growth Management Act which mandated established growth areas in the county and appropriate zoning to preserve farmland, mineral land and forest land in the county. As part of the effort to ensure long term agriculture in the county, in 1997, Thurston County instituted a purchase of development plan to preserve 942 acres of Nisqually Valley farmland.

As an area of human habitation for thousands of years initially by Salish people and subsequently by the British and Americans, the history of Thurston County reflects its location in the verdant forests and prairies of Southwest Washington. Notable for its many Puget Sound inlets, the county has a history centered around development of its natural resources and its title as the seat of state government. The county's many archaeological and historic resources reflect this long era of human interaction with the distinctive qualities of the area. The history of the county is a continuum from the earliest Salish people to the present. Thurston County's goals, objectives and policies reflect the setting and heritage of the area.