

PART II Population

Where Washington's People Live

Because of the influences of topography, climate, accessibility and recent industrialization, Washington's population is distributed unevenly throughout the state. Over two-thirds of the people live in the western portion, concentrated largely in the industrial cities of Puget Sound. The Olympic Mountains and Willapa Hills of the Coast Range and the Cascade Mountains stand out as sparsely populated areas in western Washington. The Willamette-Puget Sound Lowland, extending from Vancouver on the Columbia River northward to Bellingham near the Canadian border, is the major population belt of the state. It contains a fairly well-distributed rural population on its river deltas and rolling, glacial drift plains.

The mountains, hills, plateaus, irrigable valleys and dry climatic conditions cause a generally clustered pattern of population settlement in eastern Washington. Mountainous areas including the eastern Cascade Mountain slope, the Okanogan Highlands, the Blue Mountains, and the Selkirks have but few people. Dryland and upland areas which cannot be irrigated, such as large portions of the Waterville Plateau, the Channelled Scablands and the hills of Yakima County, are thinly settled. Both rural and urban population is concentrated in the irrigated Yakima, Kittitas, Wenatchee, Okanogan and Walla Walla Valleys and in the Pasco and Quincy Basins. In the far eastern section--the Palouse Hills--the uniform soil, topography and moderate rainfall permits a more evenly distributed population. The industrialized Spokane metropolitan area and the rich agricultural Yakima Valley are the major population clusters of eastern Washington.

Growth of Population

Washington was explored by Spanish, Russian, British and American expeditions between 1592 and 1805, but no settlements occurred until 1810. Ownership of the area was disputed by America and Great Britain. A compromise, the Joint Occupancy Treaty of 1818, permitted both American and British fur traders and settlers to live north of the Columbia River. British interests (the Northwest Company and the Hudson's Bay Company) established fur trading posts at Spokane and Walla Walla in 1810 and 1818. American claims were strengthened by the Lewis and Clark Expedition (1804-1805) and by the settlements at Fort Spokane, Okanogan, and Astoria by the Pacific Fur Company. The British increased their influence as they established agricultural settlements at Fort Vancouver and Fort Nisqually between 1824 and 1833. Settlement by Americans north of the Columbia, although permitted by treaty, was discouraged by the Hudson's Bay Company which desired to maintain its fur trade monopoly.

A growing tide of American land settlers over the Oregon Trail during the 1840's changed the balance of control in favor of the United States. Most of the Americans settled in the Willamette Valley of Oregon. Unhindered by the British, several hundred American settlers moved northward across the Columbia into the Puget Sound country and soon outnumbered the British fur traders.

The conflict of interests was solved by the Oregon Treaty of 1846, which gave the United States the present area of Washington and established the Canadian boundary as it exists today. Oregon Territory (including all of the present state of Washington) was created in 1848 by Congress, with its capital in Salem, Oregon. Settlers north of the Columbia met in 1851 at the Monticello Convention in present Longview, Washington, and asked for a separate territorial government. Washington Territory was created March 2, 1851, with a capital at Olympia on Puget Sound. Isaac I. Stevens was appointed as Governor.

Population growth was slow before 1860. Lack of roads, the long distance from the East, and the difficulty of clearing the dense forests of the Puget Sound country kept immigration to a minimum. Indian hostility prevented settlement in most of eastern Washington prior to 1858, and that tended to slow movement into the Puget Sound Basin. The Washington population was only 11,594 according to the 1860 Census.

In 1863, the Washington territorial boundaries were changed to the present state lines by the creation of Idaho Territory. The Census of 1870 was the first to follow the present boundaries, and it enumerated a population of 23,995.

Population grew rapidly from 1870 to 1890. New transcontinental railroads brought large waves of immigrants from the East and Europe. The completion of the Union Pacific to the Columbia River brought new settlers into southeastern Washington. When the Northern Pacific reached Spokane in 1880 and was continued on toward Puget Sound, settlers occupied the Palouse and Big Bend wheat lands and the Yakima Valley. In 1883, six new counties were created in eastern Washington. Expansion of coastwise shipping and lumbering built up the cities on Puget Sound and at Grays Harbor. Washington Territory was admitted to the Union as a state in 1889. The population at this time was 350,000.

The period 1900-1910 was a decade of rapid growth in which the state gained 624,000 persons, more than doubling to 1,141,990. Two other railroads, Great Northern and Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul reached Puget Sound in 1893 and 1909, respectively. The lumber industry and agriculture supported more people; land and timber seekers homesteaded free public domain lands in the mountainous areas. The Alaskan gold rush doubled Seattle's population within a decade. Railroads and ships brought large numbers of people from Europe who took up lumbering, fishing, mining and agriculture. Ranked numerically according to the 1920 Census, the largest foreign-born groups in the state were Canadians (42,000), Swedes (35,000), Norwegians (34,000), English (23,000), Germans (22,000), Italians (18,000), Finns (12,500), Russians (11,000) and Irish (9,000).

Between 1910 and 1940 population grew at a slower but steady rate. The increase was about 20,000 per year. The lumber industry began to decline after 1929. Reduced employment and a growing scarcity of land were reflected in a slower rate of population growth. However, during the 1930's, many farmers from the Great Plains drought areas moved overland to Washington seeking farming opportunities.

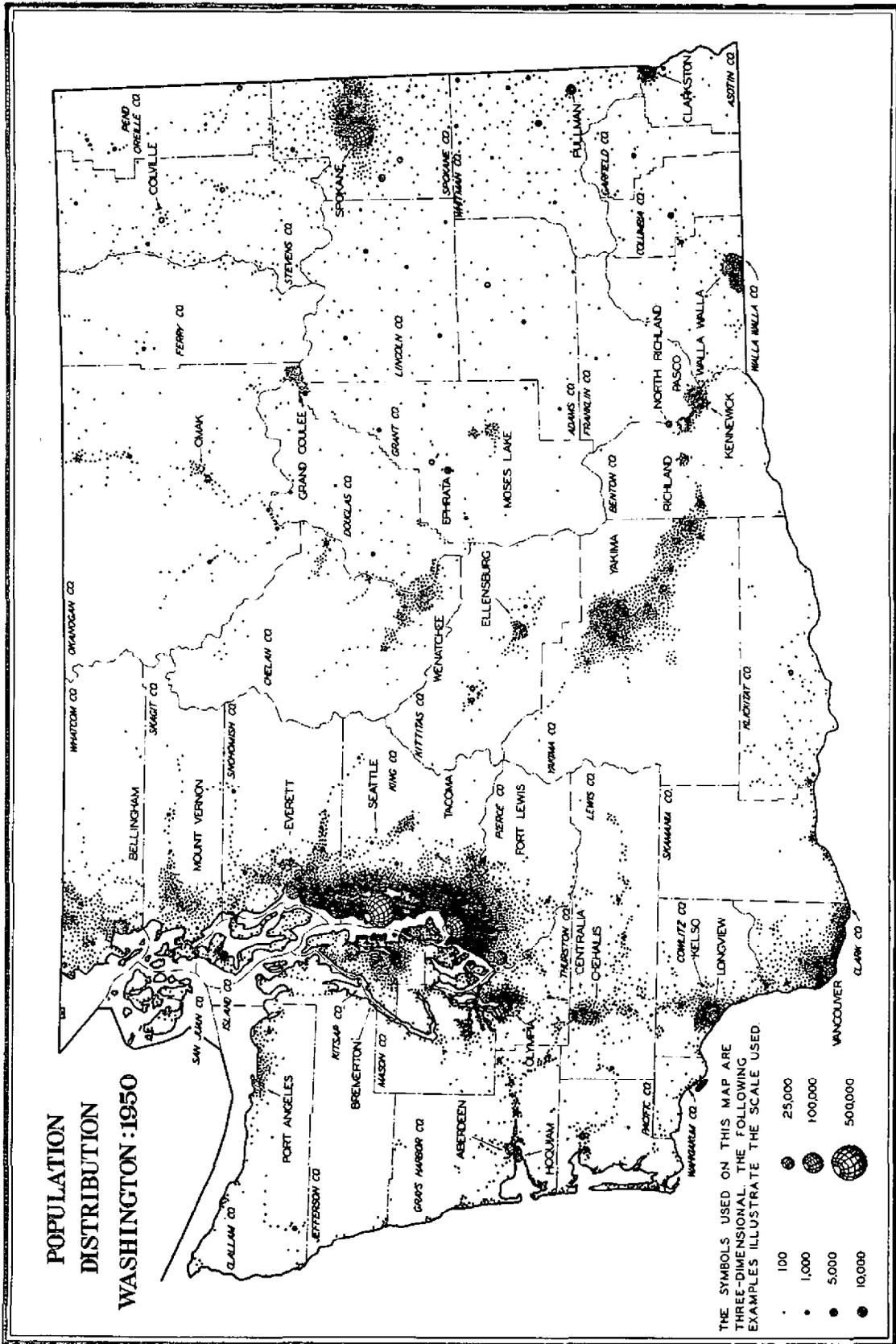
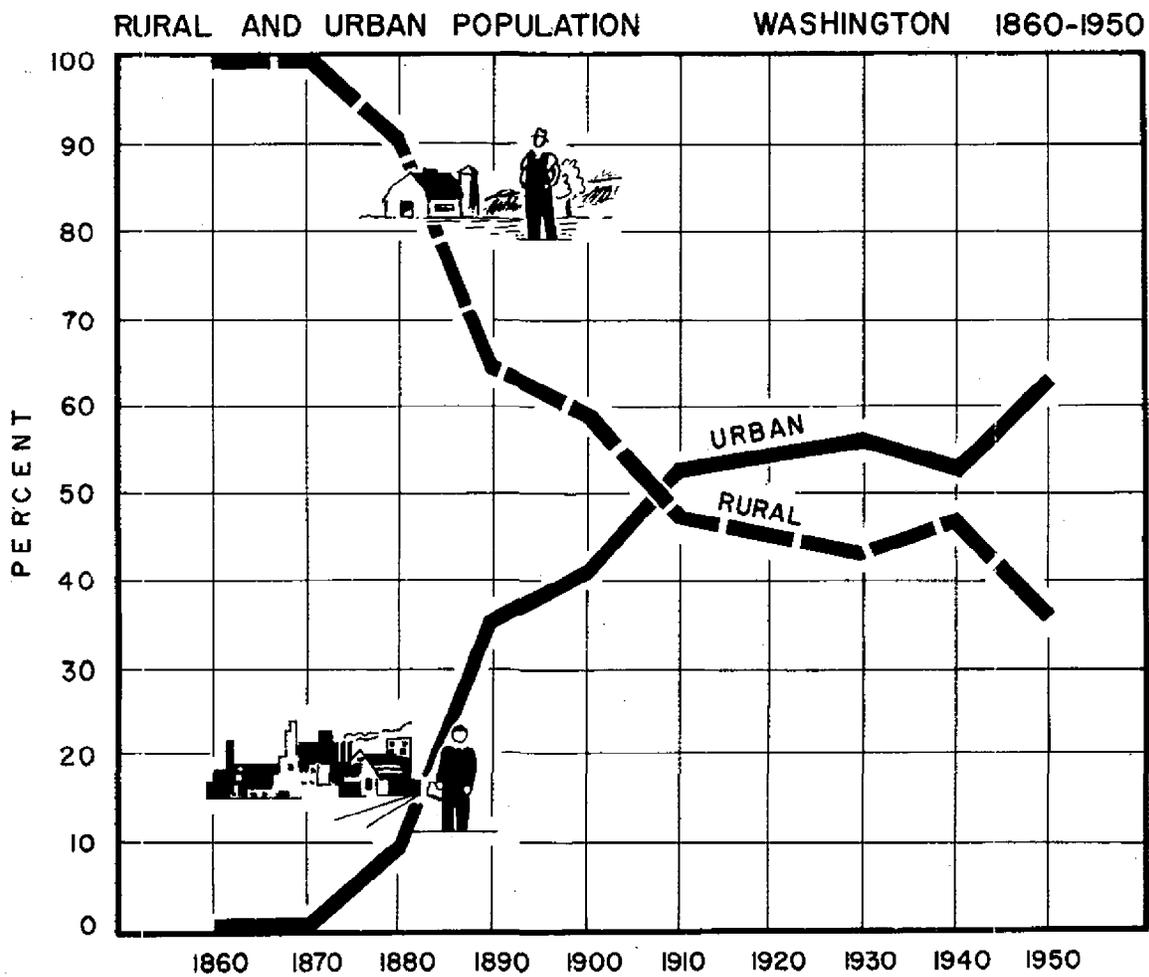
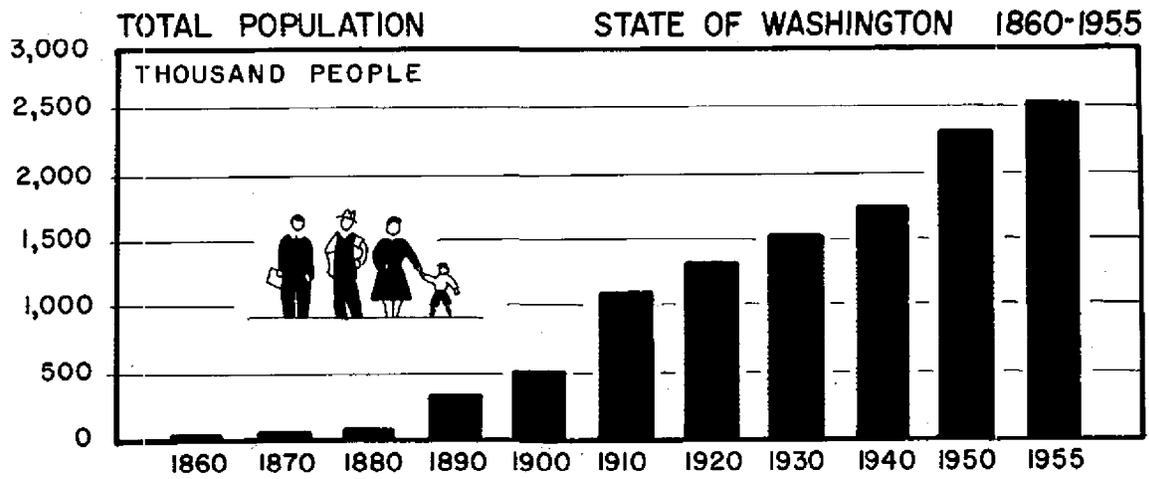


Figure 6.- DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION IN WASHINGTON, 1950 (Map by courtesy of Population Research Office, Washington State Census Board).



SOURCES OF DATA: U.S. Census 1860-1950, Washington State Census Board, Estimate - 1955.

The 1940-1950 decade brought the greatest increase in Washington history. Primarily an overland movement of laborers to new defense industries, it resulted in an increase of 642,772 in ten years, raising the state population to 2,378,963 in 1950. Most of the new growth was in the industrial metropolitan districts in King, Pierce, Kitsap, Clark and Spokane Counties and at the Federal atomic works in Benton County.

Urban and Rural Population

In 1870 the entire population of Washington was living in rural areas--in villages and on farms. By 1900, 211,477 of the population of Washington, or 40.8 percent, were living in urban areas. In 1950, according to the Census definition of "urban" which includes residents of towns of 2,500 and larger, 1,503,166 persons, or 63.2 percent, were living in urban areas. And over 52 percent lived in three standard metropolitan areas comprised of Seattle, Tacoma, Spokane and their surrounding suburban cities and towns. This trend follows the national pattern.

Table 1.- Population of Washington
1860-1955

| Year | Population |
|------|------------|
| 1860 | 11,594 |
| 1870 | 23,955 |
| 1880 | 75,116 |
| 1890 | 357,232 |
| 1900 | 518,103 |
| 1910 | 1,141,990 |
| 1920 | 1,356,621 |
| 1930 | 1,563,396 |
| 1940 | 1,730,191 |
| 1950 | 2,378,963 |
| 1955 | 2,580,000 |

Sources: U.S. Census; Population;
Washington State Census
Board, April 1, 1955
Estimate.

Bellingham (35,700), Everett (34,100), Bremerton (32,200), Walla Walla (25,400) and Longview (23,500).

Population of Kittitas County

In 1955, Kittitas ranked twentieth among Washington counties with an estimated 21,700 inhabitants. Kittitas is one of several eastern Washington counties which have been decreasing in population since 1950. Between 1890 and 1950 population increased steadily but the rate of increase was slow following the land boom of the 1900-1910 decade.

As settlement history progressed the percentage of rural population has increased and urban population (persons living in incorporated places of 2,500 or more) has decreased. Rural population increased from 46 percent in 1910 to

The rural population is predominantly rural nonfarm, consisting of 602,026 persons who live in the country, but do not operate farms. The rural farm population decreased about one-fifth between 1940 and 1950, and numbered only 273,771, or 11.5 percent of the state's total 1950 population of 2,378,963. As a result of the farm-to-city trend in Washington, about one person in ten is living on a farm and about six persons out of ten are living in a town or city larger than 2,500.

According to the 1955 estimates of the Washington Census Board, the ten leading cities of Washington ranked as follows: Seattle (555,000), Spokane (182,000), Tacoma (156,000), Yakima (43,000), Vancouver (41,950),

62 percent of the county total in 1950, according to the U.S. Census. This trend differs from the general state trend in which rural population has been declining while urban population has been growing. The development of irrigation from 1900 to 1930 led to more rural settlement. At the same time, the urban or town settlements in the coal mining cities--Cle Elum and Roslyn--decreased. In 1910 there were three urban places (towns with over 2,500 people) whereas in 1950 Ellensburg was the only one. Rural farm population (persons living on farms) was 4,107 in 1930 and 4,890 in 1950, being 22 percent of the total.

Table 2.- Population of Kittitas County
1890-1955

| Census Year | Population | Percent Rural | Percent Urban |
|-------------|------------|---------------|---------------|
| 1890 | 8,777 | 100 | 0 |
| 1900 | 9,704 | 71.3 | 28.7 |
| 1910 | 18,561 | 45.7 | 54.3 |
| 1920 | 17,737 | 47.6 | 52.4 |
| 1930 | 18,154 | 60.7 | 39.3 |
| 1940 | 20,730 | 70.6 | 29.4 |
| 1950 | 22,235 | 62.0 | 38.0 |
| 1955 1/ | 21,700 | 59.7 | 40.3 |

1/ 1955 data are estimated by the Washington State Census Board.

Source: U.S. Census, Population.

There are now five incorporated cities and villages in Kittitas County. With the exception of Ellensburg and the village of Kittitas, all have decreased in population since 1920 according to most recent estimates by the Washington State Census Board.

Table 3.- Population of Incorporated Places
Kittitas County, 1910-1956.

| Incorporated City or Town | 1910 | 1920 | 1930 | 1940 | 1950 | 1956 1/ |
|---------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------|
| Cle Elum | 2,749 | 2,661 | 2,508 | 2,230 | 2,206 | 1,894 |
| Ellensburg | 4,209 | 3,967 | 4,621 | 5,944 | 8,403 | 8,260 |
| Kittitas | -- | 200 | 244 | 501 | 586 | 510 |
| Roslyn | 3,126 | 2,673 | 2,063 | 1,743 | 1,537 | 1,525 |
| South Cle Elum | -- | 587 | 338 | 340 | 442 | 405 |

1/ Populations for 1956 are estimates of the Washington State Census Board, April 1, 1956.

Sources: U.S. Census, Population.
Washington State Census Board.

Changes in the incorporated city and village populations are related to the transition from employment in mining to more employment in agriculture and service industries. Ellensburg, the county seat and leading trade center has

grown steadily, doubling its population of 4,209 in 1910 to 8,260 in 1956. Marketing and food processing of Kittitas Valley crops and livestock has provided an important employment and trade basis for growth at both Ellensburg and Kittitas. All the upper valley mining and lumber towns (Cle Elum, Roslyn and South Cle Elum) show declines as a result of decreased production of coal. Markets for Kittitas County coal were gradually lost after 1920 as railroads and industries converted to fuel oil. Kittitas, the leading coal producing county of the state, was seriously affected by this technological change. Mining employment and coal production in the area has decreased sharply since 1920.

Mining, agriculture and trade opportunities in Kittitas County have attracted settlers of varied origins and backgrounds. Recent overland immigrants from eastern states and foreign immigrants from Europe add to a mixture which is typical of many west coast farm areas. Work in the coal mines and opportunities to buy newly irrigated farm lands attracted a large foreign immigrant population from 1900 to 1920. One person in five was a foreign-born immigrant at the time of the Census of 1920. Nationalities from Europe included 783 Italians, 665 Austrians, 598 English (Cornishmen and Welsh), 245 Yugoslavs,

Table 4.-- Foreign-Born White Population, Kittitas County
1890, 1920 and 1950

| Country of Birth | 1890 | 1920 | 1950 |
|------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| England and Wales..... | 517 | 598 | 178 |
| Scotland..... | 128 | 191 | 78 |
| Northern Ireland..... | -- | -- | -- |
| Ireland (Ire)..... | 132 | 74 | 25 |
| Norway..... | 103 | 109 | 55 |
| Sweden..... | 125 | 146 | 66 |
| Denmark..... | 74 | 120 | 68 |
| Netherlands..... | 15 | 15 | 10 |
| Switzerland..... | 9 | 36 | -- |
| France..... | 43 | 36 | 23 |
| Germany..... | 342 | 206 | 68 |
| Poland..... | 3 | 43 | 33 |
| Czechoslovakia..... | -- | -- | 58 |
| Austria..... | 54 | 665 | 97 |
| Yugoslavia..... | -- | 245 | 273 |
| Russia (U.S.S.R.)..... | 23 | 110 | 34 |
| Finland..... | -- | 52 | 21 |
| Italy..... | 104 | 783 | 325 |
| Canada-French..... | -- | 10 | 2 |
| Canada-Other..... | 253 | 309 | 289 |
| All other countries... | 122 | 204 | 133 |
| Totals | 2,047 | 3,952 | 1,847 |
| Percent foreign-born.. | 31.4 | 22.0 | 8.0 |

Source: U.S. Census, Population

206 Germans, 146 Swedes and 120 Danes. By 1950 the proportion of European immigrants to American-born was far less--below one in ten. Lessened employment in mining and government restrictions on European immigration to the

United States caused this change. Many miners moved from the coal fields during the 1930's and 1940's. In 1950 there were 1,847 foreign-born whites, which was only 8 percent of the county total, as compared to 3,952 or 22 percent in 1920.

Kittitas County population is now predominantly Caucasian. The Negro population in 1950 was only 75, being mainly employed in manufacturing, trade and services in the Ellensburg vicinity. Other races residing in the county include 25 American Indians, 4 American Chinese and 6 American Japanese.

Table 5.- Employment of the Population
Kittitas County, 1950

| Types of Employment | Male Workers | Female Workers | Total Workers | Percent of Workers |
|--|--------------|----------------|---------------|--------------------|
| <u>Total employed workers</u> | 5,845 | 1,684 | 7,529 | 100.0 |
| Agriculture..... | 1,599 | 106 | 1,705 | 22.6 |
| Forestry and fisheries..... | 15 | -- | 15 | .5 |
| Mining..... | 630 | 5 | 635 | 8.4 |
| Construction..... | 459 | 9 | 468 | 6.2 |
| Manufacturing..... | 452 | 67 | 519 | 6.9 |
| Transportation..... | 463 | 20 | 483 | 6.4 |
| Retail and wholesale stores..... | 905 | 479 | 1,384 | 18.3 |
| Miscellaneous services..... | 827 | 863 | 1,690 | 22.4 |
| Public administration (government employment)..... | 217 | 56 | 273 | 3.6 |
| Other employment..... | 278 | 79 | 357 | 4.7 |

Source: U.S. Census, Population.

Farming is the leading field of employment in Kittitas County. Out of about 7,530 men and women who were self-employed or working for salaries and wages in 1950, 1,700 or about 22 percent of the total were employed in agriculture. In terms of wages paid by farm operators for harvesting and other forms of seasonal labor, Kittitas agriculture is fourteenth in the state, paying out over \$1,068,000 per year for hired help.