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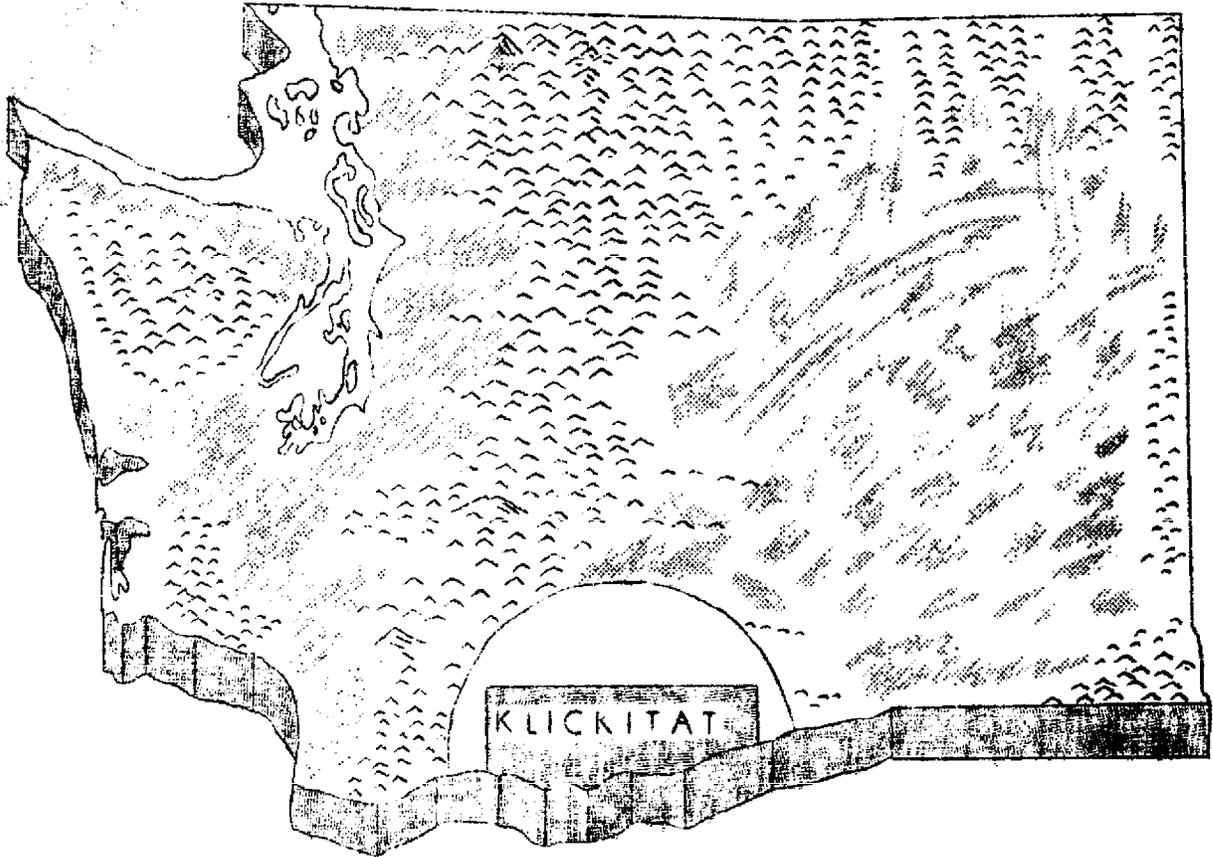
Klickitat County

Agriculture

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COUNTY AGRICULTURAL DATA SERIES
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WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Agricultural Marketing Service
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FOREWORD

This book on Klickitat County is one of an original series being devoted to the history and present nature of agriculture in each of the thirty-nine counties of the State of Washington. This project was initiated in 1956 through funds made available by Sverre N. Omdahl, Director, Washington State Department of Agriculture, 1948-56. State funds were matched by moneys from the United States Department of Agriculture under the Research and Marketing Act of 1946.

County agricultural data books are intended to serve a variety of needs. Continually changing conditions in a dynamic state such as Washington require constant planning by groups and individuals both in private enterprise and public service. Comprehensive knowledge of land resources, population and agricultural-economic trends in a local area such as Klickitat County is of great value. This book will be useful for reference in public and private instruction by vocational agriculture and social studies teachers in Klickitat County schools. It has been devised also to inform adults interested in knowing more about their immediate area, as well as persons and enterprises concerned with agricultural production and marketing or prospective settlement and investment in the county.

Carefully selected geographic facts, agricultural history, population trends and statistical data are included to give an over-all appreciation of Klickitat County. The enumerations of the United States Censuses of Population and Agriculture since 1860 and recent estimates of the Washington State Census Board are summarized to give a perspective of development since the establishment of Klickitat County in 1859. Facts on topography, soil, climate and forests which influence farming are integrated from surveys and reports of government agencies. Estimates of leading crops by years since 1939 by the Washington Crop and Livestock Reporting Service provide a measure of the trend in the agriculture of the county farm industry.

Acknowledgment is accorded the professional work of several persons. Immediate direction was under Emery C. Wilcox, Agricultural Statistician in Charge, Estimates Division, Agricultural Marketing Service, United States Department of Agriculture. Supervision, research and cartographic illustration was performed by Dr. Woodrow R. Clevinger, Market Analyst, Washington State Department of Agriculture. Lloyd J. Mercer, graduate student in Agricultural Economics, Washington State College and resident of Addy, Stevens County, wrote the sections on pattern of agriculture, crops, livestock and marketing and collected much original information. Mr. Richard Perry, of the Washington State Department of Agriculture, and Leonard W. Orvold, D. W. Barrowman, Agricultural Statisticians, Agricultural Marketing Service, United States Department of Agriculture, gave valuable assistance. The clerical staff of the Washington Crop and Livestock Reporting Service prepared tabular material for the book.

J. D. Dwyer, Director
Washington State Department of Agriculture

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PART I

History of Klickitat County Agriculture

Introduction

Klickitat County is located in south-central Washington in the Cascade Mountains and along the Columbia River Gorge bordering Oregon. One of the early areas settled north of the Columbia, it has grown in population and in importance as a diversified agricultural county based on grain, hay, fruit and livestock.

Klickitat contains an area of 1,912 square miles and ranks fourteenth in size among Washington counties. It is larger than the State of Rhode Island and is nearly the size of Delaware. The name is derived from the Klickitat Indians, a tribal nation which dominated the Columbia River Gorge through the Cascades prior to 1855. Klickitat County was created early in territorial history, being established in 1859. In later periods of state reorganization, Benton and Yakima Counties have been detached from it. Today, Klickitat County's population is 12,600 and Goldendale, population 2,200, is the county seat.

About three-fifths of the area is in farms, many of which are large holdings for growing grain or raising livestock. Population is relatively sparse. Types of agriculture and sizes of farms vary from the west where fruit and general livestock farming is common, to the semi-arid east where large wheat and livestock farms are operated on the Horse Heaven Hills Plateau.

The economic history is characterized by a gradual change from the general livestock raising of the pioneer settlers to specialization in cash grain crops in the east and fruit, dairy and livestock farming in the west. With the expansion of mechanized dryland farming in the Horse Heaven region, wheat and barley became leading commercial crops. In 1954 the county ranked twelfth in state wheat production. Livestock, cattle and sheep became of secondary importance, the county ranking fourteenth in number of cattle and sixth in sheep in the state in 1954. Commercial alfalfa is a specialty crop in which the county ranks fourth. The fruit industry, although reduced since 1920, ranks ninth.

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Agriculture today is about equal with lumber manufacture in the county economy. There were in 1940 3,670 persons living on 800 farms. This farm population produced crops and livestock worth nearly \$7,600,000 in 1954. Among Washington counties, Klickitat ranks twenty-third in value of marketed farm products.

History 1/

Before the arrival of white men, present Klickitat County was occupied by a powerful and war-like Indian nation who commanded the Columbia River gap through the Cascade barrier. They fished in the rapids and at Celilo Falls and were encamped in villages on the bars of the Columbia River. They ranged on horseback into the mountains to pick berries and hunt, extending their range into the Willamette, Hood River and Sandy River valleys of Oregon. These Indians, known as the Klickitat, were prominent in resisting white settlement between 1855 and 1860 in western Washington Territory. An early report by the Lewis and Clark Expedition in 1805 described a large Klickitat village at Wishram which numbered over 3,000.

After their original contact with Lewis and Clark in 1805, the Klickitat Indians developed a fur and horse trade with British fur posts at Vancouver and Cowlitz Landing between 1810 and 1850. They levied tolls on fur traders and early settlers who boated through the Columbia River Gorge. Some hired out as farm laborers to pioneers in the lower Columbia River and Willamette Valleys.

As a result of the Donation Land Law of 1850 giving 640 acres to each family who came to Oregon Territory, white encroachment in the area north of the Columbia River was intensified. Under Chief Quatley, the Klickitats joined an Indian confederacy of Yakimas and Nisquallies to resist white settlement. In 1855-1858 the Klickitats took a leading part in an Indian war and made attacks on forts and settlements in the Columbia Gorge and as far west as Steilacoom and Seattle on Puget Sound. The U. S. Army initiated a campaign against the Indian Confederacy which resulted in peace in 1858. Treaties were made recognizing both white and Indian land rights. The Yakima Indian Reservation and fishing rights on the Columbia River grew out of this conflict.

1/ This historical summary has been derived from six sources:

- (1) An Illustrated History of Klickitat, Yakima and Kittitas Counties. Interstate Publishing Company. Chicago, 1904.
- (2) Washington, A Guide to the Evergreen State. Work Projects Administration, Federal Works Agency. Published by Washington State Historical Society, 1941. pp. 469-470, 395-400.
- (3) John McEwen, "Horticulture in Klickitat". The Coast, November 1910, Seattle, Wash. (a magazine series on Klickitat County agriculture).
- (4) H. S. Hartley, "Fruit Raising in Klickitat". The Coast, A Magazine of Town and Country Life. Seattle, Wash., November 1910.
- (5) Delia M. Coon. "Klickitat County: Indians of and Settlement by Whites". The Washington Historical Quarterly. October 1923. pp. 248-261. The Washington University State Historical Society, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington.
- (6) Richard M. Perry. "The Counties of Washington", State of Washington, Secretary of State. Olympia, Washington (mimeographed 1943).

Held back by Indian hostility, settlement of the valleys and grassland plateaus of Klickitat County was started by livestockmen after 1858. The first was Erastus Joslyn, who bought some land at White Salmon in 1853. Joslyn was only a temporary settler, however, and was forced by Indians to take refuge in Oregon. In 1855 A. H. Curtis, J. H. Alexander and Alfred Allen settled in Klickitat County under the protection of Fort Dalles. In 1859 Amos Stark settled in Klickitat Valley and Willis Jenkins brought in 150 head of cattle at White Salmon River. In 1860 Lew Parrot and John J. Golden arrived in the upper Klickitat Valley and Goldendale was founded by the latter settler. Pioneers of 1860 were numerous cattlemen, traders and homesteaders who moved into the valley lowlands. They included the Tarter family, Mortimer Thorp, Calvin Pell, Charles Splawn, Stanton H. Hones, Captain McFarland, Jacob Holstead, James Clark, Nelson Whitney, William Murphy, Jacob Gulliford, Francis Venables, Tim Chamberlain and Ben Snipes. Many of these developed cattle and sheep herds and moved through Satus Pass northward into the Yakima Valley, the Kittitas Valley and the range country in north-central Washington. Foundation herds thrived on the Horse Heaven Hills grassland. Ben Snipes was a noted cattleman who drove herds as far north as the Canadian gold fields of the upper Okanogan country. There were enough livestockmen in the Klickitat Country in 1859 to justify establishing a county government.

River boat traffic helped to sustain pioneer settlements, allowing them to trade farm products and buy essential goods. An early industry at White Salmon, Bingen and Lyle was the sale of cordwood for steam boats. In the 1870's settlers using the Homestead Act began arriving in larger numbers. Prominent among these were Charles N. Bickle, for whom Bickleton was named. Others were Samuel Martin, Isaac and Ralph Cousins and Ripley Dodge at Cleveland, Joseph Nixon on Pine Creek and Robert and John Graham and Angus Forbus at Alder Creek. These land settlers pioneered fruit raising and wheat growing in eastern Klickitat County.

Marketing wheat was an early problem which was solved by road and railroad building from Goldendale to the Columbia River landing at Lyle. The Oregon Railroad and Navigation Company helped to develop river landings and other means of getting sacked wheat from Klickitat County to tidewater terminals or to transshipment terminals at The Dalles.

The period 1900-1910 was one of active agricultural and commercial expansion in which population increased from over 6,400 to 10,180. The Seattle, Portland and Spokane Railway was completed along the north bank of the Columbia River giving good access to major terminals for grain, livestock and fruit. Bridges were constructed and ferry and water freighting service was improved to reduce isolation. Local communities and land companies promoted fruit farming as a new addition to grain and livestock production. Land companies such as Maryhill Land Company organized by Samuel Hill and another group, the Klickitat County Land Company encouraged settlement. Farming and timberland was advertised and sold. Fruit land sold for \$30 to \$100 per acre and wheat land for \$10 to \$50.

Commercial orchards, vineyards and vegetable farms were developed on the north bank and in the White Salmon and Klickitat Valleys. The Apple Growers Union of White Salmon developed fruit shipping to the east and Europe. Leaders in fruit and berry growing mentioned in the farm magazine literature of 1910

were: G. A. Thomas, S. M. Hair, John McEwen, Hunter Hill and S. Z. Zeigler of White Salmon, C. O. Barnes and A. L. Baker of Goldendale and George Wade of Columbus. Fruit marketing became closely associated with that of growers in the Hood River Valley, Oregon. 1/

During the expansion period other basic industries were established. Flour mills were built at Goldendale and Bickleton. A cooperative creamery was built in the Trout Lake Valley. Lumber mills were put in operation at White Salmon, Bingen and Goldendale. Wheat shipping and storage granaries were established at Lyle, Goldendale, Roosevelt, Bickleton and Alderdale.

The Census of Agriculture for 1919 showed Klickitat County had developed into a prosperous farming region. At the end of World War I the county was producing crops worth \$4,500,000 a year and its farms had \$2,127,000 worth of livestock. There were 72,000 acres of wheat, yielding 1,095,000 bushels in 1919 and 295,000 bearing fruit trees, yielding 400,000 bushels of apples, pears and peaches. There were 15,500 head of cattle, 49,000 head of sheep and 8,000 head of horses and mules.

In the 1920's and 1930's agriculture receded considerably. This was a factor in a small decline of the county's population. Wheat prices and market conditions were poor; wheat fell from \$2.12 per bushel in 1920 to \$1.07 in 1929. In 1919 grain growers in Klickitat had received \$2,500,000, but in 1929 the wheat crop was down to 51,000 acres yielding 890,000 bushels worth less than \$1,000,000. This decline in income from the county's leading crop had a severe impact. Many dryland farms were abandoned and many farm families and youth migrated to cities. In this period there was less marketing opportunity in fruit and livestock, also causing declines in these two types of farming.

In the 1940's and 1950's Klickitat County agriculture began to revive. Spurred by World War II new capital was invested in lumbering. Increased local manufacturing employment on a part-time or supplementary basis became available. Construction work on new highways and hydroelectric dams and waterway improvements strengthened local economy. By 1950 agriculture was exceeded by income from nonfarm employment in lumbering, construction, transportation and commercial trades. Improved prices and market outlets for wheat, barley and cattle strengthened the farm economy. As a result of all these factors, Klickitat County reached a new population high of 12,600 in 1955.

Agricultural development has been guided by several agencies and private enterprises. Guidance in grain growing and dryland farming was received from Washington State College through the Dryland Experiment Station at Lind and in horticulture from the Tree Fruit Experiment Station at Wenatchee and the Southwest Washington Experiment Station at Vancouver. County Agents of the State College Extension Service located at Goldendale have provided technical assistance in animal and plant industry and farm management. Private agencies of influence have been the Washington Wheat Growers Association and Washington Cattlemen's Association.

1/ Farming and settler opportunities in Klickitat County as of 1910 are described in detail in The Coast, A Magazine of Town and Country Life for November 1910. This agricultural and settler guide magazine was published in Seattle and is in the Northwest History Reference Collection, University of Washington Library.