

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 settlement 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 capitol 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 capitol 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 that 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.

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	1,111,990
1920	1,356,621
1930	1,563,396
1940	1,736,191
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 Mason County

In 1955 Mason County ranked twenty-third among Washington counties with an estimated population of 15,400. Population has grown steadily since the 1860 Census with the exception of a downward trend between 1910 and 1920. Population growth was most rapid during expansion periods in the lumber and pulp industries between 1920 and 1930 and between 1940 and 1950. Growth trend has been slower since 1950.

Because of industrial growth and concentration of population at Shelton, lumber port on the Sound, about one-third of the inhabitants are urban. In 1956

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),

an estimated 5,700 persons were living in Shelton. According to Census classification which terms any incorporated place of 2,500 or more as urban, Shelton was the only urban place. Shelton is the largest city, the county seat and the only incorporated place in Mason County.

The majority, or about two-thirds of Mason County residents, are classified as rural, living in villages and towns, along highways and on farms. The rural-farm population, persons living on and operating farms, is relatively small, amounting to only 2,898 persons according to the last U. S. Census in 1950. Only 20 persons out of each 100 live on farms in this industrial county.

Table 2.- Population of Mason County
1860-1955

Census Year	Population	Percent Rural	Percent Urban
1860	162	100	0
1870	289	100	0
1880	639	100	0
1890	2,826	100	0
1900	3,810	100	0
1910	5,156	100	0
1920	4,919	100	0
1930	10,060	69.3	30.7
1940	11,603	68.1	31.9
1950	15,022	66.7	33.3
1955	15,400	65.8	34.2

Source: U.S. Census, Population

Shelton, the only incorporated place and Mason County's seat of government, has grown steadily since 1920. Expanded industry in forest products and increased employment caused Shelton to grow from about 3,100 in 1930 to 5,700 by 1956. Other towns are Hoodsport, Belfair, Union and Allyn which each have several hundred rural non-farm residents.

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

Incorporated City or Town	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1956 ^{1/}
Shelton	1,163	984	3,091	3,707	5,045	5,700

^{1/} Population for 1956 is estimate of the Washington State Census Board, April 1, 1956.

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

Mason County has been a melting pot of a variety of foreign immigrants as well as a large number of settlers from other states of America. Before 1920, about one-third of the homesteaders and workers in logging and sawmilling were

coming from northwestern Europe. Scandinavians, English, Scotch, Irish and Germans were the most numerous immigrants in the Censuses between 1890 and 1920. In the Census of 1920 immigrants from Europe and Canada amounted to over 850— nearly 18 percent of the county population. After 1920 immigration from Scandinavia, the British Isles, Germany, Finland and Canada decreased because of United States quota limits on the number who could come to America for land or employment. By 1950 foreign-born population made up only about 5 percent of Mason County's residents.

There is an American Indian population of about 275 persons living in Mason County according to the last Census. Most of these reside on the Skokomish and Squaxin Island Reservations which front on Hood Canal and Puget Sound.

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

Country of Birth	1890	1920	1950
England and Wales.....	87	87	73
Scotland.....	36	17	15
Northern Ireland.....	--	--	--
Ireland (Eire).....	64	31	22
Norway.....	78	100	81
Sweden.....	91	146	88
Denmark.....	12	44	26
Netherlands.....	3	6	7
Switzerland.....	8	8	--
France.....	9	13	5
Germany.....	54	66	64
Poland.....	--	11	13
Czechoslovakia.....	1	--	8
Austria.....	4	17	8
Yugoslavia.....	--	29	8
Russia (U.S.S.R.).....	39	3	7
Finland.....	--	97	55
Italy.....	1	2	8
Canada-French.....	--	8	15
Canada-Other.....	335	159	238
All other countries...	28	13	53
Totals	850	857	794
Percent foreign-born	30	17.5	5.3

Source: U.S. Census, Population

Mason County's economy and basic employment pattern is based predominantly on the manufacturing of wood products, including logging, lumbering and processing of wood into pulp and fibre boards. Agriculture in 1950 ranked only fifth as a source of wages and income from self-employment. Nearly half of the labor force, or 2,193 persons, were in manufacturing as of 1950. Employment in miscellaneous services was second largest and wholesale and retail store employment was third in payroll importance. The change from less farm employment to more industrial and commercial employment, observed in Mason County since 1940, is a common trend in western Washington.

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

Types of Employment	Male Workers	Female Workers	Total Workers	Percent of Workers
<u>Total employed workers</u>	4,111	1,097	5,238	100.0
Agriculture.....	343	42	385	7
Forestry and fisheries.....	175	63	238	5
Mining.....	2	--	2	
Construction.....	333	5	338	7
Manufacturing.....	2,075	118	2,193	42
Transportation.....	92	20	112	2
Retail and wholesale stores.....	401	303	704	13
Miscellaneous services.....	399	400	799	15
Public administration (government employment).....	110	69	179	3
Other employment.....	211	77	288	6

Source: U.S. Census, Population

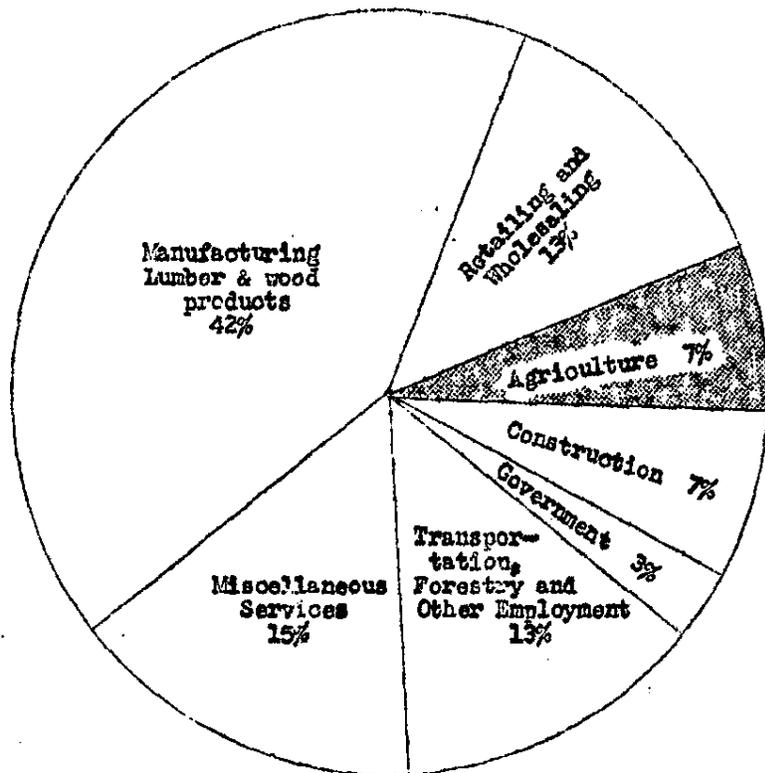


Figure 3.- Agricultural Employment Compared With Other Employment in Mason County, 1950
(Based on U.S. Census of Population, 1950)