

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.

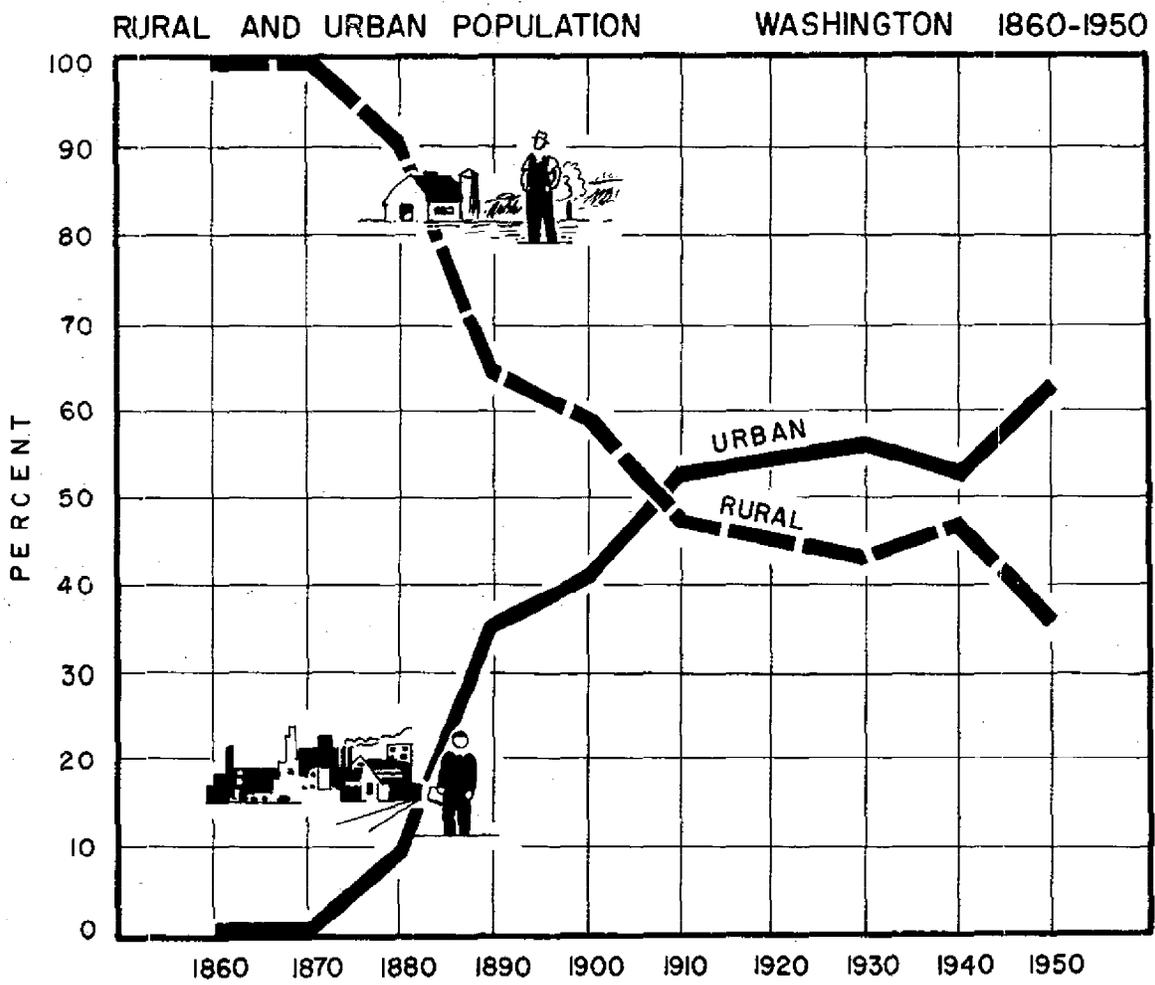
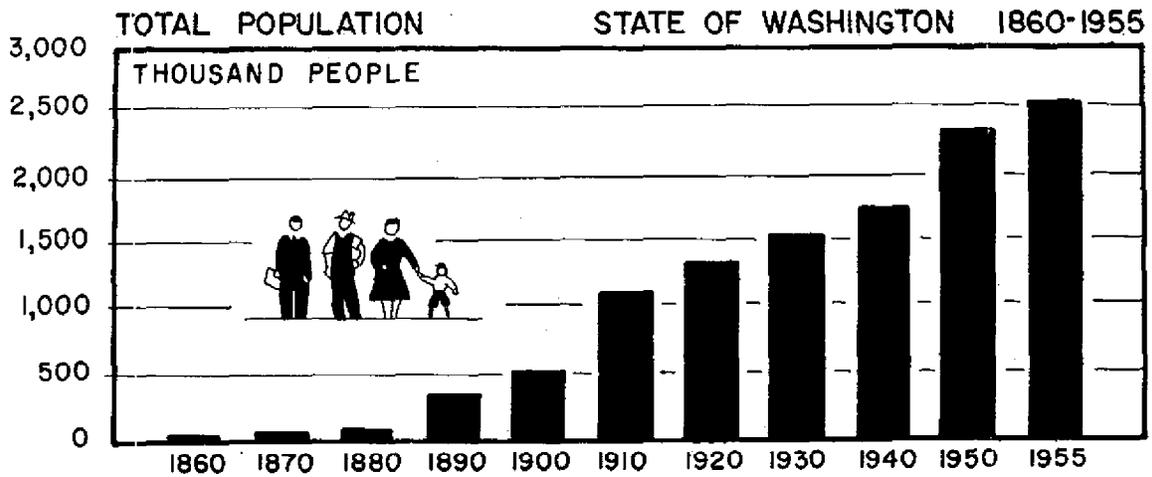
Population growth was slow before 1860. Lack of roads, the long distance from the East, and the difficulty of clearing the dense forests of the Puget Sound country kept immigration to a minimum. Indian hostility prevented settlement in most of eastern Washington prior to 1858, and that tended to slow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



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	1,735,191
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 Wahkiakum County

Wahkiakum County ranked thirty-seventh among Washington counties with a population of 3,900 in 1955. The population grew steadily from 1880 to 1940 and then decreased slightly. Because there are no incorporated cities with more than 2,500 population, the entire population is rural according to the classification of the United States Census. However, a majority of the rural inhabitants (56.8 percent) were nonfarm (not living on farms) and 43.2 percent were classified as rural farm in 1950.

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),

Table 2.- Population of Wahkiakum County
1860-1955

Census Year	Population	Percent Rural	Percent Urban
1860	42	100	0
1870	270	100	0
1880	1,598	100	0
1890	2,526	100	0
1900	2,819	100	0
1910	3,285	100	0
1920	3,472	100	0
1930	3,862	100	0
1940	4,286	100	0
1950	3,835	100	0
1955 ^{1/}	3,900	100	0

^{1/} 1955 data are estimated by Washington State Census Board.

Sources: U.S. Census, Population, 1860-1950.
Wash. State Census Board, 1955 estimates.

Cathlamet, the county seat, is the only incorporated city in the county. Its population reached a peak in 1930 during an active period of fishing and logging in the area. Cathlamet had 284 persons in 1920, 738 in 1930, 640 in 1940, 510 in 1950 and was estimated at 600 in 1955.

Typical of many counties in the western United States, Wahkiakum County has been a melting pot of many nationalities who have migrated from Europe to seek new jobs and lands. In 1890 nearly one-half of the population consisted of European immigrants and by 1950 they made up about one-sixth. They are employed about equally in the three main industries--forest products, farming and fishing. The heavy predominance of Scandinavian and Finnish settlers is partially related to the type of occupations found in the county as well as the climate which is similar to that of Scandinavia. Norwegians are the largest group, followed by Finns and Swedes. These groups have contributed much to the progress of dairy farming and many farmers on Puget Island are of Norwegian and Swedish descent. Finns were prominent pioneers on the Grays and Deep River farmlands.

Agriculture is the second most important type of employment in Wahkiakum County. In the 1950 Census the total employed numbered 1,390 with agricultural employment numbering 363, or about 26 percent of all workers. Manufacturing of pulp, paper, lumber and other forest products was first as a source of wages and income. There were 509 workers, 37 percent of all the employment, engaged in manufacturing.

Table 3.- Foreign-Born White Population, Wahkiakum County
1890, 1920 and 1950.

Country of Birth	1890	1920	1950
England and Wales.....	41	24	13
Scotland.....	19	19	5
Northern Ireland.....	--	--	--
Ireland (Eire).....	35	27	7
Norway.....	136	278	154
Sweden.....	155	158	78
Denmark.....	22	21	10
Netherlands.....	1	1	4
Switzerland.....	4	10	--
France.....	10	8	5
Germany.....	80	35	12
Poland.....	1	8	5
Czechoslovakia.....	1	--	1
Austria.....	31	59	7
Yugoslavia.....	--	42	15
Russia (U.S.S.R.)....	181	17	--
Finland.....	--	257	103
Italy.....	11	12	2
Canada-French.....	--	10	1
Canada-Other.....	112	35	32
All other countries..	432	27	22
Totals	1,172	1,039	476
Percent foreign-born.	46.4	30.0	12.4

Source: U.S. Census, Population.Table 4.- Employment of the Population
Wahkiakum County, 1950.

Types of Employment	Male Workers	Female Workers	Total Workers	% of Workers
<u>Total employed workers</u>	1,192	198	1,390	100.0
Agriculture.....	323	40	363	26.1
Forestry and fisheries.....	119	2	121	8.8
Mining.....	0	0	0	0
Construction.....	61	2	63	4.5
Manufacturing.....	497	12	509	36.6
Transportation.....	18	2	20	1.4
Retail and wholesale stores.....	64	45	109	7.8
Miscellaneous services.....	48	57	105	7.5
Public administration (government employment).....	28	22	50	3.6
Other employment.....	33	16	49	3.5

Source: U.S. Census, Population.

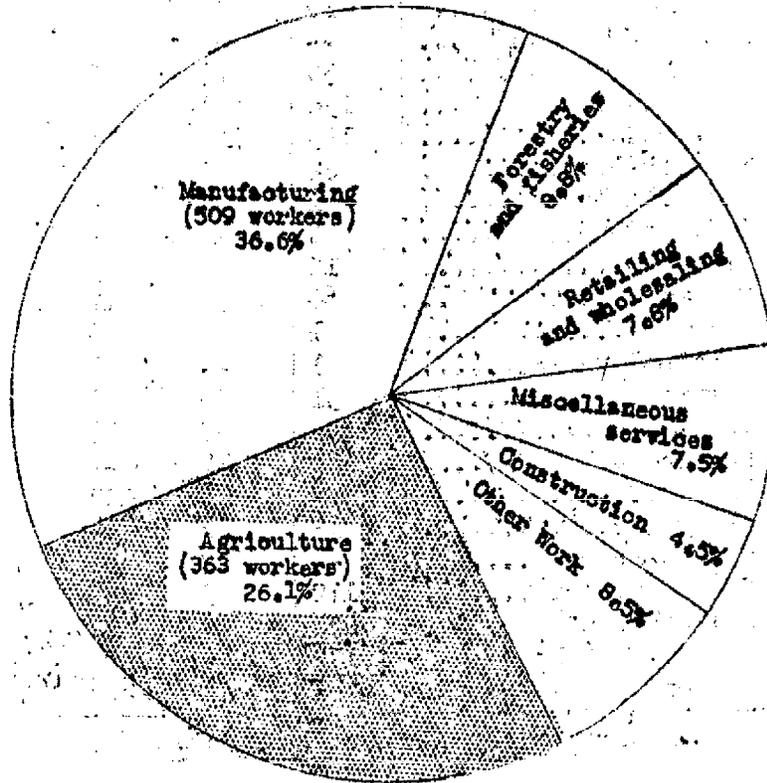


Figure 3.- Agricultural Employment Compared With Other Employment in Wahkiakum County, 1950.