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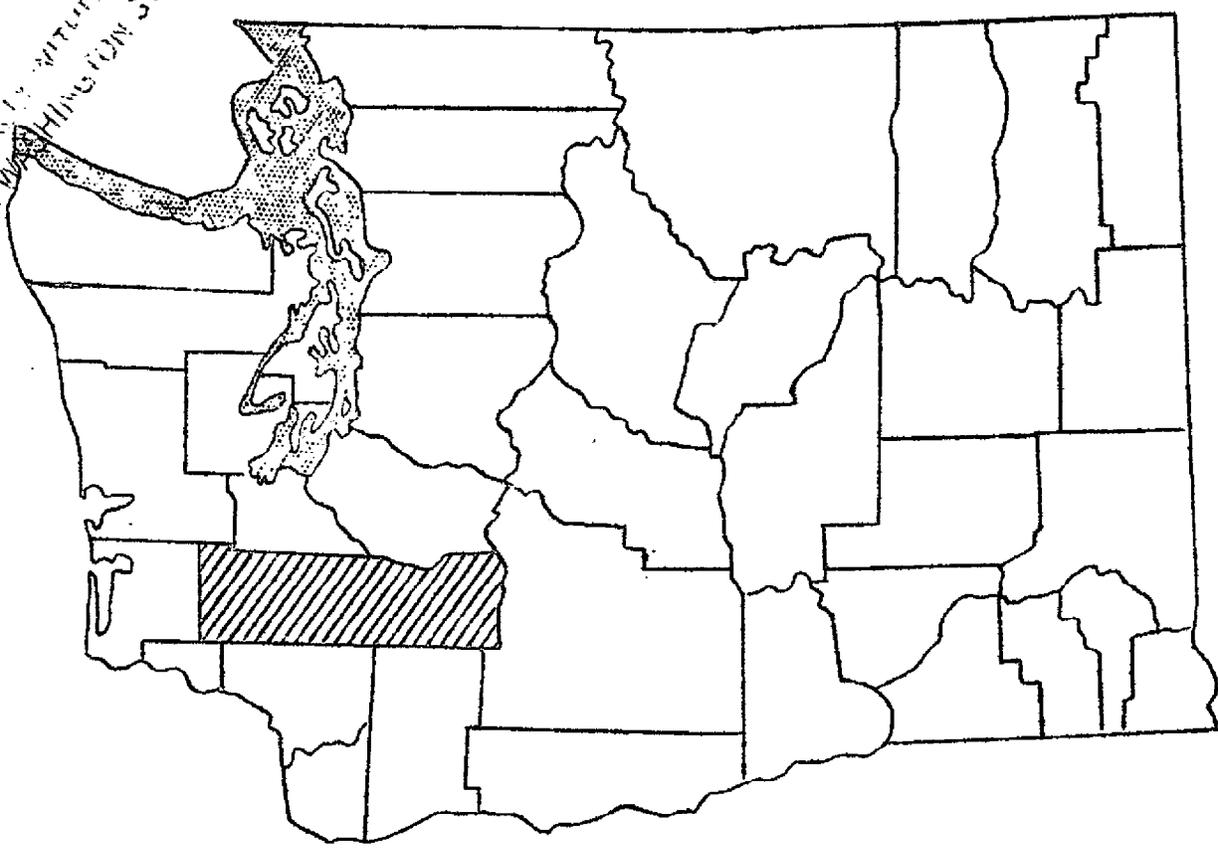
LEWIS COUNTY AGRICULTURE

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COUNTY AGRICULTURAL DATA SERIES
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FOREWORD

This bulletin on Lewis County is one of a second edition series devoted to presenting the history and present nature of agriculture in each of the thirty-nine counties of the State of Washington. The original series was initiated in 1956 by the Washington State Department of Agriculture. 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, especially in the field of marketing agricultural products. Knowledge of land resources, population and agricultural-economic trends in a local area such as Lewis County is of great value. This book will be useful for reference in public and private instruction by social studies teachers. It has been devised also to inform adults interested in knowing more about their immediate area.

Selected geographic facts, agricultural history, population trends and statistical data are included to give an over-all appreciation of Lewis County. Enumerations of the United States Censuses of Population and Agriculture since 1870 are summarized to give a perspective of development since the establishment of Lewis County in 1845. Facts on topography, soil, climate and forest 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, Field Operations Division, Statistical Reporting Service, United States Department of Agriculture. Research involved in up-dating and revising the original information and the preparation of the manuscript of the second edition of the Lewis County bulletin was performed by George K. Saito, Research Analyst, Washington State Department of Agriculture. Review and editing of the first draft of the present bulletin was done by Emery C. Wilcox. Statisticians of the Washington Crop and Livestock Reporting Service gave valuable assistance. Margaret B. Quiroga, Washington State Department of Agriculture, typed all of the textual and tabular material and prepared the graphs. The bulletins were reproduced and assembled by members of the clerical staff of the Washington Crop and Livestock Reporting Service.

Olympia, Washington
July 1, 1964

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

Funds for this bulletin provided by the Washington State Department of Agriculture were matched by the United States Department of Agriculture under the Research and Marketing Act of 1946.



PART I

HISTORY OF LEWIS COUNTY

Introduction

Lewis County is an area of river valleys, grass-covered prairies, upland plains and forest covered mountains. Located in southwestern Washington, the county lies partly in the Willamette-Puget Sound Lowland and partly on the Cascade Range to the east, and also includes portions of the Coast Range within its boundary on the west. It is the largest county in western Washington with 2,452 square miles (approximately 1,569,280 acres) within its border. In size, it ranks sixth among the 39 counties of Washington. According to the 1959 Census of Agriculture, however, only 16 percent of Lewis County was classed as farm land and less than 4 percent was in cropland. There are a few river valleys, prairies and a limited number of foothills and benchlands suitable for crops and grazing, but the greater part of the county's area is too hilly and mountainous.

In spite of the natural limitations of the area, farming activities play an important role in the total resource base of Lewis County. The economic history of Lewis County has been characterized by a steady growth of agriculture in conjunction with rapid expansion of employment in lumbering, manufacturing and service trades. In little over a century, settlers of varied origins and nationalities have developed over 2,200 farms. A vast forest wilderness was tamed and developed by those with a vision of agricultural enterprise.

History 1/

Before settlement by white men, the present Lewis County area was occupied by the Cowlitz, Chehalis and Klickitat Indians. Numbering several thousand, they lived by fishing in the rivers and streams and by hunting and berry gathering in the forests of the low valleys and in the alpine meadows of the Cascade Mountains. The area was a dense forest with the exception of some bracken fern and wild grass prairies burned over periodically by the Indians for horse ranges. Only in a few areas was there open prairie as a result of continuous burning by the Indians to make wild berry fields and deer hunting grounds.

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The Chehalis and Cowlitz were "canoe" or "river" Indians living on the major streams now bearing their names. They were of Coast Salishan stock and had a similar language and economic culture. When the Hudson's Bay Company trappers moved into the area after 1818, the Cowlitz and Chehalis Indians traded large volumes of furs at the post on Cowlitz Prairie.

The Klickitat were "horse" Indians who frequently invaded the Cowlitz and Chehalis Indian areas by moving westbound over Cascade Mountain trails. Klickitat Prairie, surrounding Mossyrock in central Lewis County, was their main camping and grazing area.

First white settlers were the French-Canadians and Scots employed by the Hudson's Bay Company as trappers, craftsmen and agricultural workers. Simon Flamondon, a French-Canadian with the company, arrived on Cowlitz Prairie in 1818, married a Cowlitz Indian chief's daughter and established friendly trading relations with the tribe. He influenced Hudson's Bay Company to establish a trading post on Cowlitz Prairie near the upper limit of boat navigation on the Cowlitz River. Later (about 1830) Flamondon and other French-Canadians established land claims in the lowlands of western Lewis County.

In 1825 Hudson's Bay Company began developing a large agricultural enterprise on Cowlitz Prairie under the management of the Puget Sound Agricultural Company. Called "Cowlitz Farm" it covered about 4 square miles (2,560 acres). This large ranch, one of three operated by British interests in western Washington before American control was established, produced large amounts of grain and livestock which was sold to various posts and to settlers on the Cowlitz and Columbia Rivers. Some was shipped to California and Alaska. Cattle were brought from California and pigs and sheep were imported from England to stock the farm. Crops included wheat, oats, barley, potatoes and vegetables. From 1846 to 1851 the farm was managed by George Roberts. During this period it is reported to have produced about 10,000 bushels of wheat and 4,000 bushels of oats per year. According to terms of the treaty of 1846, the Hudson's Bay Company relinquished control to Americans. Most of the early settlers working for the company remained in the area and became American citizens.

Earliest missionaries in Lewis County were the Roman Catholic priests, Father Francois Blanchet and Father Modeste. They established a mission on Cowlitz Prairie in 1839.

Early agricultural settlement by Americans began in the 1840's along the Cowlitz Trail which crossed the plains of western Lewis County, being the overland connection between Puget Sound and the upper limit of navigation on Cowlitz

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

- (1) The Daily Chronicle, Centralia, Washington, Washington Territorial Centennial Edition, June 6, 1953.
- (2) Washington, A Guide to the Evergreen State (American Guide Series). Writers' Program of the Works Project Administration, State of Washington. Sponsored by the Washington Historical Society. Published 1941. See pages 490-495.
- (3) Richard M. Perry, "The Counties of Washington", Secretary of State, State of Washington, Olympia, Washington. 1943 (mimeographed).

River at present Toledo. There were several hundred settlers in southwestern Washington by 1845. The Oregon Territorial Legislature created Lewis County December 18, 1845, the first county of present Washington. It was named after Meriwether Lewis of the famous Lewis and Clark expedition. Lewis has been called "Mother of Washington Counties" because all other counties were formed from it as the area progressed from a territory to a state.

Early American settlers acquired land by squatter's rights and donation land claims. John R. Jackson settled on Jackson Prairie in 1845. Sidney S. Ford also settled on Ford's Prairie at present Centralia that same year. Schuyler S. Saunders took a donation land claim at the site of the present county seat, Chehalis, in 1852. J. G. Cochran, coming from Missouri with a young Negro slave, filed on the present townsite of Centralia in 1850. The slave, named George Washington, was freed and later became prominent as the founder of Centerville, later renamed Centralia.

Bottom lands in the hilly and mountainous sections were pioneered at a later period. Immigrants from Germany and Scandinavia, and Americans from midwest prairies and the Appalachian Mountains of the southern United States, were attracted by homesteading opportunities in the mountain valleys.

Settlers entered the Willapa Hills to farm and to operate sawmills at an early date. Joe Mauermann, an Austrian immigrant, commenced farming in the Dryad-Doty area in 1852. Joel H. Fay settled at Adna in 1864. J. T. Hundricks and Willard Beam located at Pe Ell in 1873. At Klaber, a German, Herman Klaber, was an early settler--prominent in hop growing. The first settler at Wildwood was T. C. Naylor.

In the eastern Cascade Mountain section, homesteading, shingle bolt driving and sawmilling began attracting settlers to the upper Cowlitz Valley after 1860. Jim Hendricks, George Miller, J. T. Doss, C. T. Landes and Clay Swigert established an important farming section on Klickitat Prairie at Mossyrock. From 1883 to 1890 the Germans, William York and Herman York, and a Tennessean, Rufus T. Siler, homesteaded in the upper Cowlitz Big Bottom district. Another Tennessean, John Randle, founded the town of Randle. Farming in the Morton district was started in 1884 by Henry Clay Temple of Iowa and Edwin Knittle, an immigrant from Holland.

An important agricultural group was the immigrants from Finland who began moving into the logged-over lands around Winlock after 1897. In that year, Gust Nisula purchased 500 acres of land and was influential in getting other Finns to settle on farms. This group played an important role in developing poultry farming, a valuable segment of Lewis County agriculture.

A major turning point in agricultural and general economic history of Lewis County came with the construction of the Northern Pacific Railroad line between Tacoma and Portland. This was completed during 1872 and 1873 and resulted in rapid growth at Winlock, Napavine, Chehalis and Centralia. By 1895 a branch line had been extended westward from Chehalis through the Coast Range to South Bend on Willapa Bay.

Railroads opened new markets for lumber and agricultural products. A large immigration of new settlers from eastern states and European countries arrived in Lewis County to work in mills and logging camps. Most of these became interested in part-time farming on logged-over lands which they could purchase for about 10 dollars per acre or less. Population increased from 888 in 1870 to 15,157 in 1900. Continuing immigration more than doubled the population in the next ten years to 32,127 in 1910. The period between 1900 and 1910 was the greatest in population growth. It could be termed "the lumber and land boom" of its history.

Before 1920 the agriculture of Lewis County was primarily devoted to growing things for home use and producing items of high value which could be transported economically to distant markets. Many farms grew hops, a crop worth \$300 a ton at that time, which could be packed long distances to railroad stations. Others raised cattle, hogs and turkeys which could be driven on foot to the railroad stockyards at Chehalis, Winlock, or Centralia. Before the railroad was built to Morton in 1910, livestock farmers in eastern Lewis County in the Randle area drove cattle, hogs and turkeys 50 to 75 miles to markets in Chehalis and Tacoma. Cream was marketed to Puget Sound by rail. Some farmers specialized in butter, bacon and eggs which found good local markets in milltowns and logging camps. Another important local item was hay and grain sold to feed horses and oxen used in logging.

From 1920 to 1950 Lewis County's population and employment grew steadily. Market outlets expanded as railroads and highways were improved over the Cascades as well as to the north and south. The increase in farming and marketing and in numerous fields of service employment attracted numbers of settlers from other states and from Europe as well as migratory workers. Population increased from 36,840 in 1920 to 41,858 in 1960.

By 1959, the county ranked twenty-first among the counties of Washington in value of farm products sold which amounted to \$9,829,217 during that year. Livestock raising is the most common type of farming and total sales amounted to \$7,935,581 in 1959. Poultry production is valued at over \$3,000,000 annually and the county ranks fourth in this respect. Dairying is Lewis's third most valuable farm industry after poultry and livestock. In 1959, the county's dairy industry ranked eleventh in the state with returns of over \$2,300,000 per year.

Oats and hay are the important crops. In 1959 Lewis ranked second in the state in clover-timothy acreage and production and fourth in oats acreage while it ranked fifth in oat production. The county is also one of the principal berry producing areas of the state.

Large investments in food processing plants have been an important influence in the development of agriculture in Lewis County. There are plants for meat packing, milk and cream, canning, freezing, juicing and concentration of fruits and vegetables. These investments have made the cities of Chehalis and Centralia important centers of food processing and marketing.