

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 621,000 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.

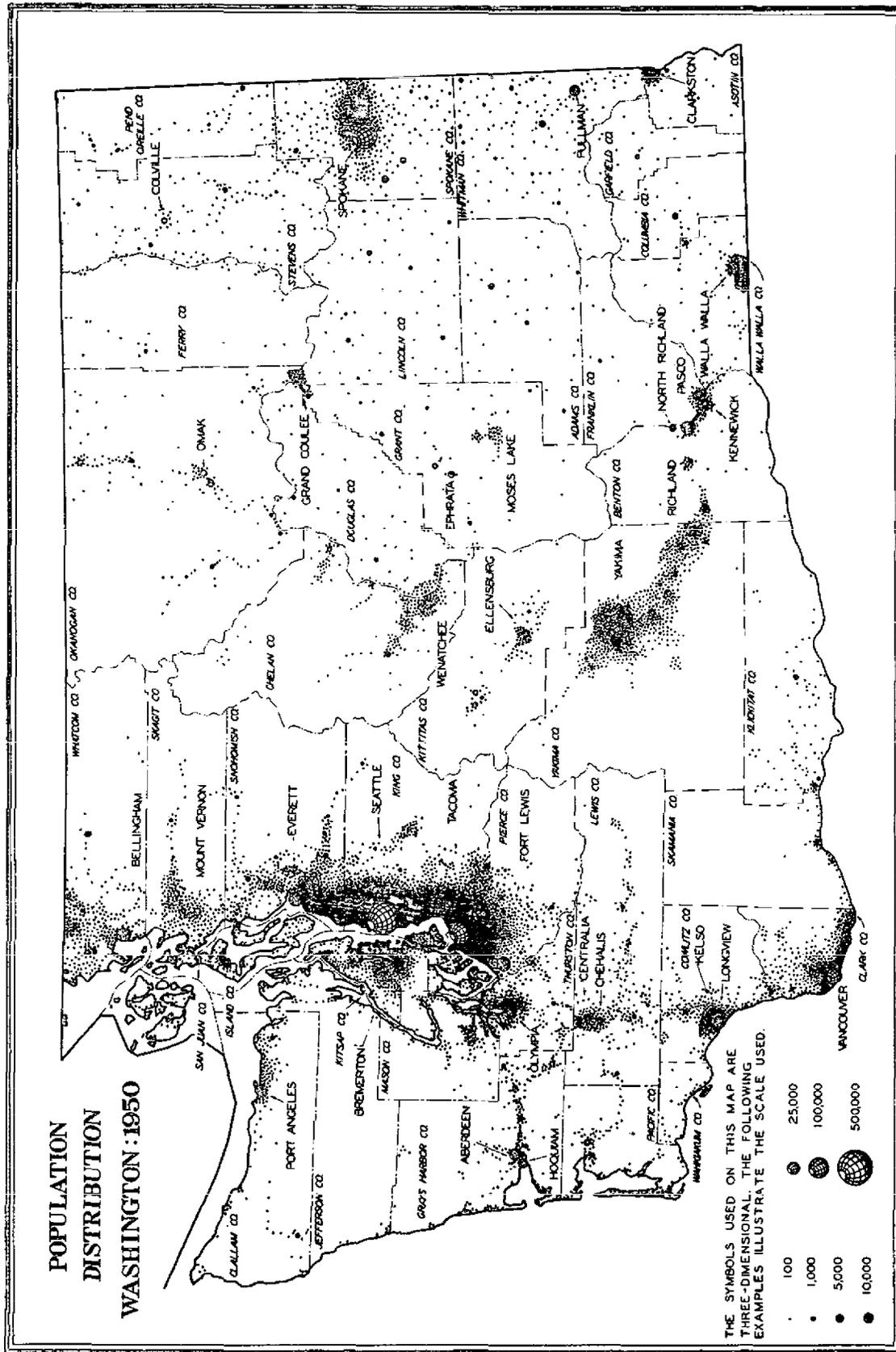
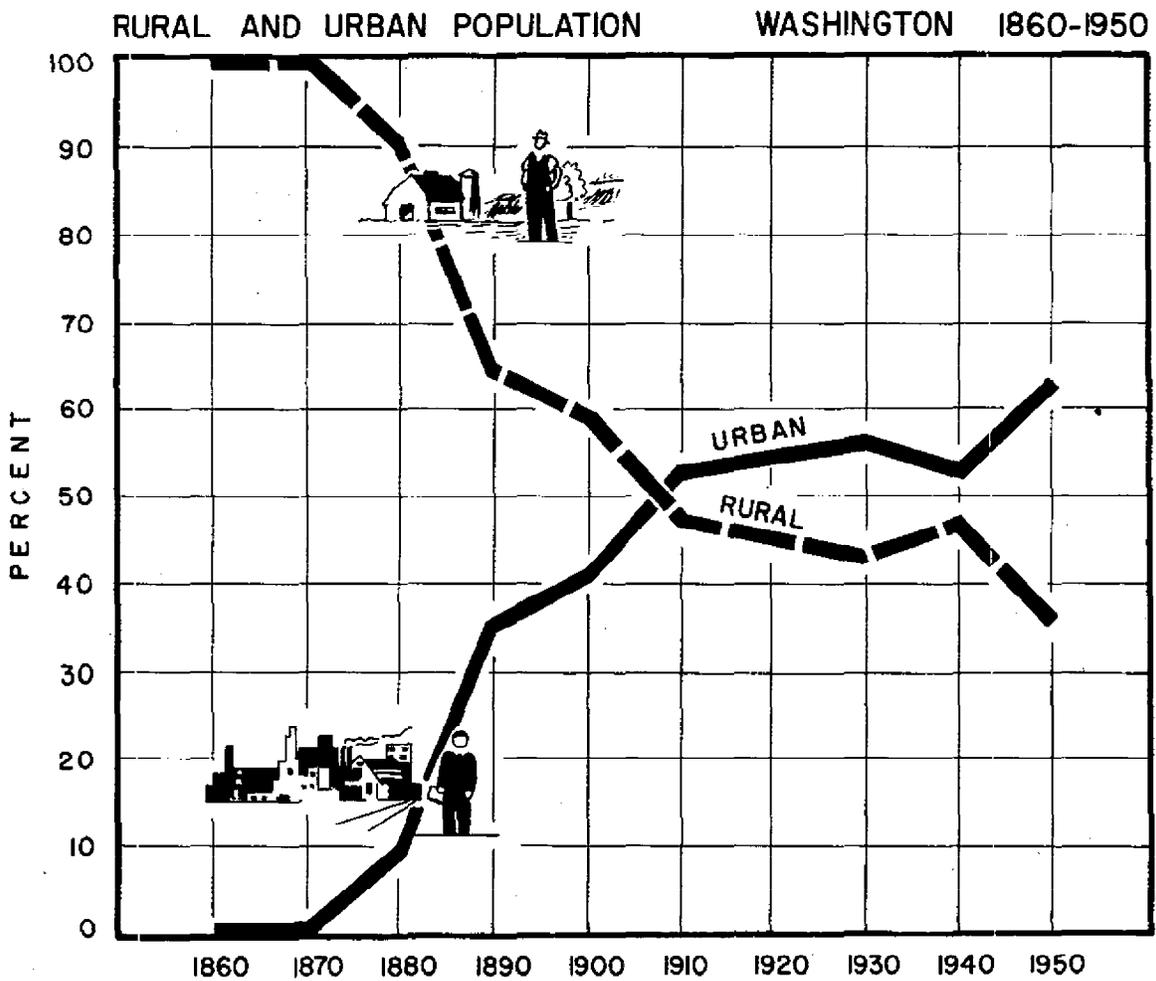
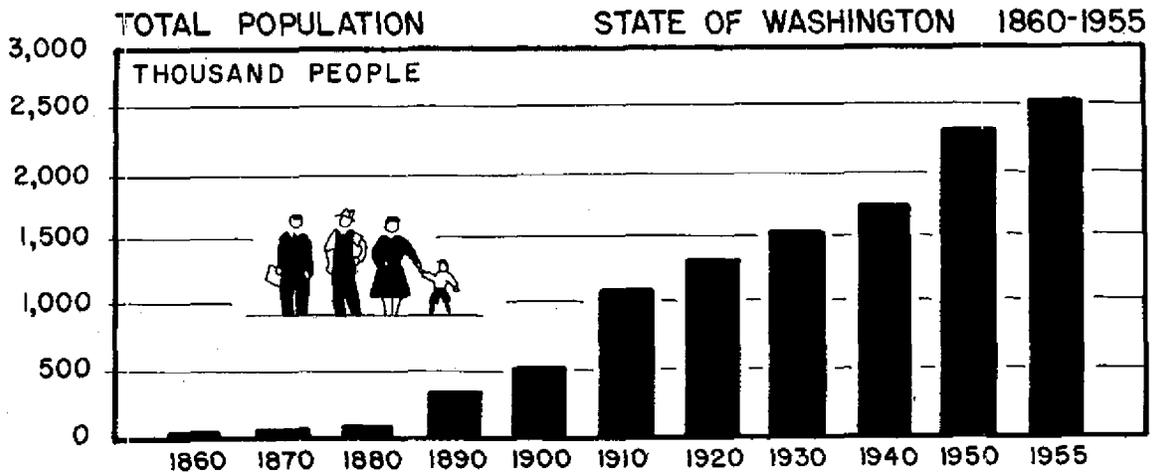


Figure 6.- DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION IN WASHINGTON, 1950 (Map by courtesy of Population Research Office, Washington State Census Board).



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	1,736,191
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 Lincoln County

Lincoln County population is quite evenly distributed over the county area and, in terms of persons per square mile, is relatively sparse. There are approximately 133 acres per person, or only 3 to 4 persons per square mile. A majority of the population lives in towns and villages. Rural farm population is less than the rural nonfarm population and is mainly scattered on large farms raising grain and livestock. Lincoln County's 1955 population of 11,100 ranked 30th among Washington counties.

Population is entirely rural and rural nonfarm according to classifications used by the Bureau of Census. None of Lincoln County's towns are large enough

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 (143,000), Vancouver (141,950),

to be classified as urban (an urban place is a city or town of 2,500 or over). The 1950 Census classified Lincoln County population as follows: rural-nonfarm, 6,853 (63%) and rural-farm, 4,117 (37%). In rural-farm population, Lincoln ranks 22nd among the state's counties.

Table 2.- Population of Lincoln County
1890-1955

Census Year	Population	Percent Rural	Percent Urban
1890	9,312	100	0
1900	11,969	100	0
1910	17,539	100	0
1920	15,141	100	0
1930	11,876	100	0
1940	11,361	100	0
1950	10,970	100	0
1955 1/	11,100	100	0

1/ 1955 figures are estimates of Washington State Census Board.

Source: U.S. Census, Population

Lincoln County's population has been irregular in growth. Between 1890 and 1910, a period of homesteading, pioneer land settlement and expansion in wheat growing, it grew rapidly and reached a peak of 17,539 by 1910. Following this peak year, population began to decline to reach a low of 10,970 by 1950. There was considerable abandonment of dryland wheat farming in the 1920's and 1930's. Drought, low wheat prices, mechanization and consolidation of farms and migration of farm families and youth to industrial cities all played a part in this downward trend. A similar population decline was common to several other wheat growing counties in eastern Washington. Many medium-sized farms and homesteads were sold; farms became larger and more mechanized with fewer families living on the land. Wheat production per farm labor-man-day greatly increased, requiring a smaller rural population and local farm labor force. In recent years since 1950, population has gained slightly and stabilized at about 11,000 as a result of some diversified farming and industry and more stability in wheat growing.

There are eight incorporated towns in Lincoln County. They contain 5,951 or slightly more than half of the county's inhabitants. Numerous wheat farmers live in the towns and commute to their properties during crop planting and harvesting seasons. Davenport (1,400) is the county seat and largest town. Davenport has grown in population since 1930. Odessa (1,154) and Wilbur (1,065) are the next largest towns and each has expanded since 1930. Smaller towns such as Almira, Creston, Harrington, Reardan and Sprague are stable communities in the wheat growing region, some of which have decreased slightly in population since they were incorporated in the early period of Lincoln County history. Most of the towns were started on railroads and as trade centers and shipping points for wheat and flour.

Table 3.- Population of Incorporated Places
Lincoln County, 1910-1957

Incorporated City or Town	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1957 ^{1/}
Almira	368	450	339	466	395	410
Creston	308	317	216	281	268	293
Davenport	1,229	1,112	987	1,337	1,417	1,400
Harrington	661	882	519	545	620	610
Odessa	885	1,050	830	816	1,127	1,154
Reardan	527	420	422	422	410	444
Sprague	1,110	822	639	641	598	575
Wilbur	757	870	737	1,011	1,043	1,065

^{1/} Populations for 1957 are estimates of the Washington State Census Board, April 1, 1957.

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

Typical of many counties of the western United States, Lincoln County has been a melting pot of immigrants from varied foreign lands. Free homesteads, low prices and productive land attracted many immigrants from agricultural

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

Country of Birth	1890	1920	1950
England and Wales.....	203	137	30
Scotland.....	73	49	14
Northern Ireland.....	--	--	--
Ireland (Eire).....	276	72	6
Norway.....	72	49	20
Sweden.....	65	124	37
Denmark.....	81	99	33
Netherlands.....	3	7	2
Switzerland.....	26	24	--
France.....	13	31	6
Germany.....	461	469	116
Poland.....	1	30	7
Czechoslovakia.....	3	--	9
Austria.....	19	33	12
Yugoslavia.....	--	1	3
Russia (U.S.S.R.).....	20	464	222
Finland.....	--	13	2
Italy.....	--	16	5
Canada-French.....	--	10	1
Canada-Other.....	312	210	95
All other countries...	74	119	49
Totals	1,702	1,957	669
Percent foreign born..	18.2	12.9	6.1

Source: U.S. Census, Population

regions of America, Canada and Europe. A distinctive feature of Lincoln County settlement was a land colonizing immigration from Germany and the Ukraine province of south Russia. Immigrants from Ukraine were German colonists who had settled in south Russia's wheat lands in the 1880's and 1890's and then moved again during the Russian Revolution of 1917-18. They came in significant numbers to eastern Washington wheat lands. The town of Odessa, Washington was named after Odessa in Ukraine, Russia. In 1920 well over 6 percent of the population was German and German Ukrainian and about 13 percent of the entire population was of foreign birth. Immigration from Europe and Canada declined after 1920 and by 1950 foreign-born citizens made up only about one-twelfth of the county's inhabitants.

Agriculture is by far the leading field of employment in Lincoln County. About 42 percent of all wage earners and self-employed persons worked in agriculture in 1950. The second and third major types of employment were in unclassified occupations and in retail and wholesale stores. Minor occupations of importance are transportation, construction, manufacturing and public administration. The county's economy is highly specialized around wheat and barley production, storage, shipping and trading.

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

Types of Employment	Male Workers	Female Workers	Total Workers	Percent of Workers
Total employed workers	3,431	659	4,091	100.0
Agriculture.....	1,641	76	1,717	42.0
Forestry and fisheries.....	2	--	2	
Mining.....	5	--	5	.1
Construction.....	300	2	302	7.5
Manufacturing.....	180	9	189	4.6
Transportation.....	304	6	310	7.6
Retail and wholesale stores.....	310	96	436	10.6
Miscellaneous services.....	174	150	424	10.3
Public administration (government employment).....	71	33	104	2.6
Other employment.....	414	187	601	14.7

Source: U.S. Census, Population