

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 Mountains 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 are 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 permit 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 American 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 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 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.

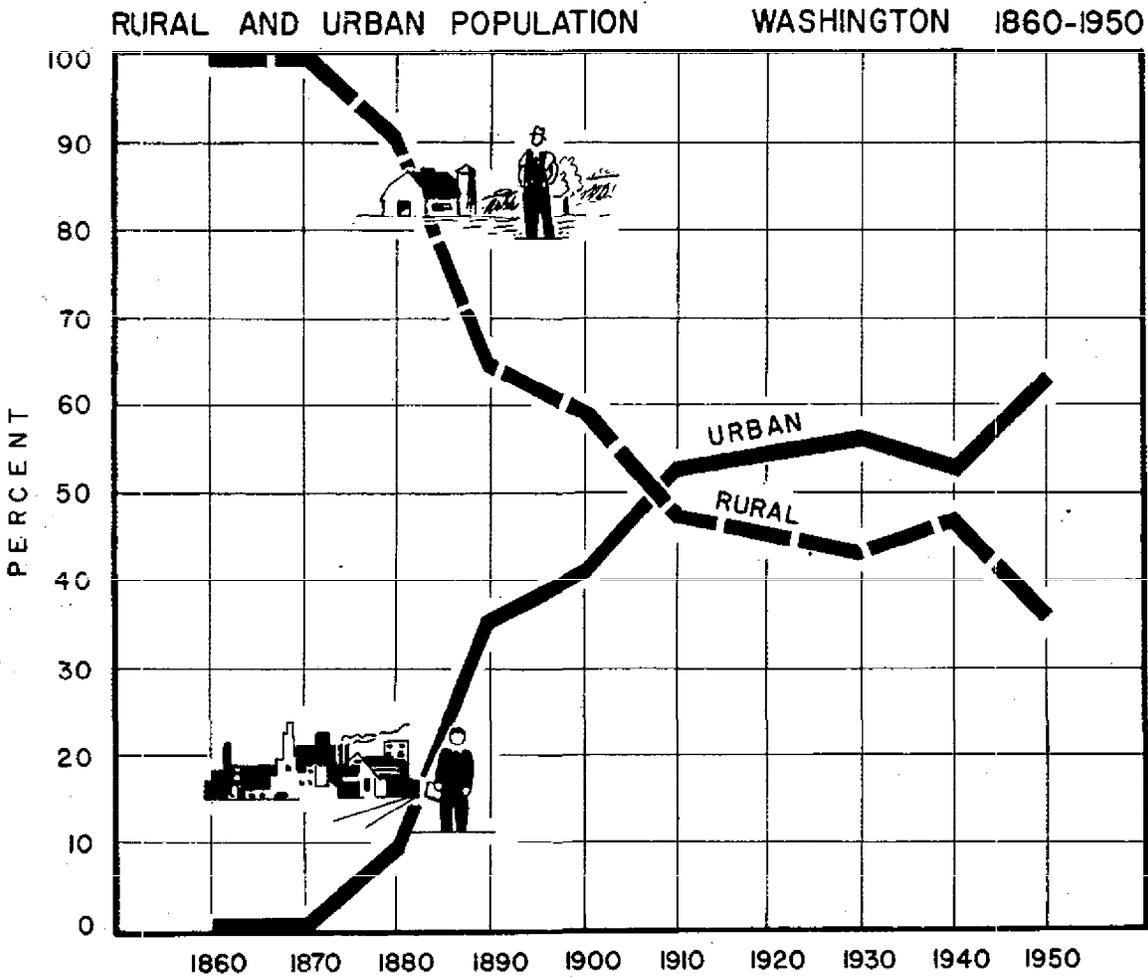
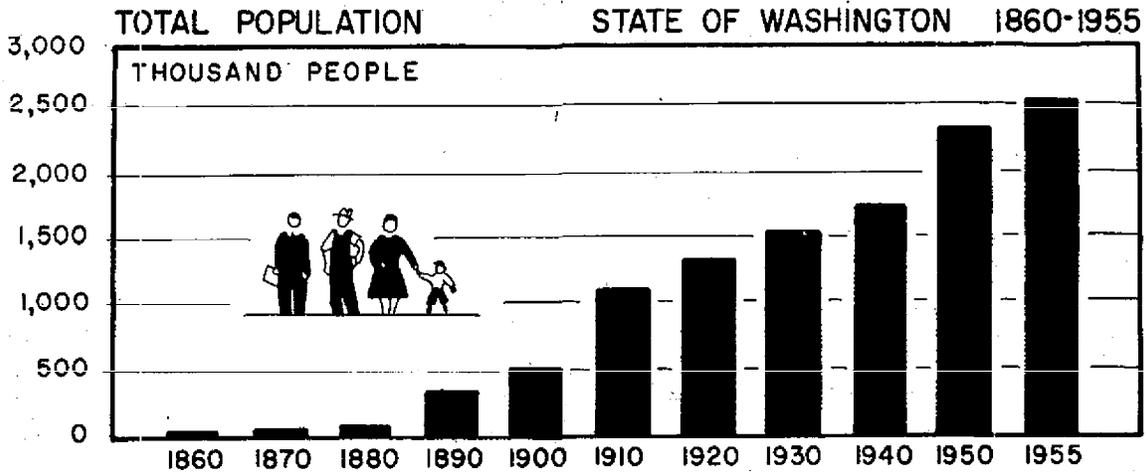
Population growth was slow before 1860. Lack of roads, the long distance from the East, and the difficulty of clearing the dense forests of the Puget Sound country kept immigration to a minimum. Indian hostility prevented settlement in most of eastern Washington prior to 1858, and that tended to slow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



SOURCES OF DATA: U.S. Census 1860-1950; Washington State Census Board, Estimate - 1955.

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The 1940-50 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 San Juan County

The resident population of San Juan County, estimated at 3,200 in 1955, has been stable since 1930 and has not expanded or varied greatly as has the general state population. San Juan and Garfield Counties are equal in population and share the position as Washington's least populated counties.

The period of 1870-1910 was one of growth in which population grew from about 550 to 3,600 in the San Juan Islands. After settlement of the territorial dispute over the islands between the United States and Great Britain in 1872 in which the San Juan archipelago was awarded to America, an increasing

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 (111,950),

Flow of settlers boosted population to 2,900 by 1900. Logging, fishing, limestone quarrying, agriculture and some tourist trade were factors in a population growth to a peak of 3,600 by 1920. During the 1920's there was some out-migration of workers and settlers to industrial areas on Puget Sound and population dropped to about 3,100 by 1930. Over the last twenty years, population has been relatively stable. One characteristic of the islands is a summer seasonal increase in numbers of persons living in summer homes and at resorts each year. Summer population is not included in the official published Census figures.

Table 2. - Population of San Juan County, 1870-1955

Year	Population	Percent Rural	Percent Urban
1870	554	100	0
1880	948	100	0
1890	2,072	100	0
1900	2,928	100	0
1910	3,603	100	0
1920	3,605	100	0
1930	3,097	100	0
1940	3,157	100	0
1950	3,245	100	0
1955	3,200	100	0

Source: U.S. Census, Population

Compared with some larger Washington counties the density of population is characterized by a high ratio of persons per unit of land area. For the county as a whole there are approximately 19 persons per square mile. According to 1950 Census enumerations, population is unevenly divided among the islands comprising three Census Divisions. Census Division 2 has the most people, consisting of San Juan Island and Henry Island with 1,611; Census Division 1, corresponding with Orcas, Waldron and Lucia, is second with 1,027; and Census Division 3, made up of Lopez, Shaw and Decatur Islands, has 604.

According to definitions of the Census Bureau, San Juan County population is entirely rural and preponderantly rural nonfarm. There is no urban population because, by Census definition, an urban place is a town or city exceeding 2,500 persons. The largest town of the islands is Friday Harbor, with 760 inhabitants. The Census classifies rural population into two categories: rural nonfarm (persons not living on farms or in towns greater than 2,500) and rural farm (persons living on and operating farms or ranches). In 1950 the rural nonfarm population was 2,217 or 69 percent of the total. Rural farm persons were 998, accounting for 31 percent.

Friday Harbor is the only incorporated village or town in the islands. Functioning as a county seat and trade center, this town had grown from 400 in 1910 to nearly 760 by 1958. Friday Harbor and Orcas are primary ferry terminals.

Table 3.- Population of Incorporated Places
San Juan County, 1910-1958

Incorporated City or Town	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1958 1/
Friday Harbor	400	522	601	658	783	759

1/ Populations for 1958 are estimates of the Washington State Census Board, April 1, 1958.

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

In addition to Friday Harbor and Roche Harbor on San Juan Island, there are several smaller unincorporated towns. Lopez, Richardson, Otis and Port Stanley are villages serving fishermen, farmers and resorts on Lopez Island. Orcas Island, largest in area has the following village and resort communities: Orcas, Deer Harbor, West Sound, Eastsound, Olga and Doe Bay. On each of the smaller islands there is a village serving a few settlers as a port and supply center. These include Decatur, Thatcher, Shaw, Prevost and Waldron.

Resorts and summer camps are characteristic elements of the San Juan Island rural settlement pattern. They are nearly all on tidewater beaches and coves. A recent directory lists 29 places of this type on the three major islands. Most developed in resorts and camps is Orcas, a forested and mountainous island, which has 20 places developed for these types of settlements.

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

County of Birth	1890	1920	1950
England and Wales.....	88	81	29
Scotland.....	30	24	10
Northern Ireland.....	--	--	--
Ireland (Eire).....	61	25	6
Norway.....	39	72	36
Sweden.....	50	63	20
Denmark.....	15	18	10
Netherlands.....	1	3	1
Switzerland.....	1	7	--
France.....	9	--	--
Germany.....	41	52	24
Poland.....	--	4	--
Czechoslovakia.....	1	--	--
Austria.....	6	8	7
Yugoslavia.....	--	5	3
Russia (U.S.S.R.).....	12	20	2
Finland.....	--	21	8
Italy.....	5	--	1
Canada-French.....	--	10	2
Canada-Other.....	182	168	107
All other countries...	17	19	26
Totals	558	600	292
Percent foreign-born	27.0	17.0	9.0

Source: U. S. Census, Population

Typical of many counties in the western United States, San Juan was settled by a mixture of immigrants from many states and foreign lands. In 1890 nearly one-third of the population was foreign-born. Canada, Norway, Sweden, England and Germany have been leading sources of immigrants. In early settlement, Canadians, Englishmen and Scandinavians arrived to take up farm lands. Many of these settled in the San Juan Islands while they were in dispute between Great Britain and the United States. British subjects remained in the islands and took up American citizenship when the islands transferred to American jurisdiction in 1872. In later years of settlement, Scandinavians, Germans, Finns and other eastern and central European immigrants arrived in larger numbers. After 1920 European immigration was limited by quotas, and by 1950 the foreign-born percentage in the island population had decreased to 9 percent.

Agriculture was the leading field of self-employment and other forms of employment according to the last Census. About 28 percent of all self-employed and wage earners worked in agriculture in 1950. A variety of small manufacturing payrolls in logging, lumbering, dairy product and fish processing and limestone manufacturing accounted for over 18 percent of employment. Some islanders also commuted to the Anacortes district on the mainland for employment in manufacturing. Miscellaneous services including work in resorts and camps was third at about 17 percent and work in retailing and wholesaling was fourth. Construction and government work are also important in the San Juan Island employment pattern. In terms of wage and income sources, the economy of the islands is diversified and is not critically dependent on a single field of employment.

Table 5.- Employment of the Population
San Juan County, 1950

Types of Employment	Male Workers	Female Workers	Total Workers	Percent of Workers
<u>Total employed workers</u>	958	267	1,225	100.0
Agriculture.....	297	49	346	28.2
Forestry and fisheries.....	38	1	39	3.2
Mining.....	7	1	8	.6
Construction.....	110	2	112	9.1
Manufacturing.....	214	11	225	18.4
Transportation.....	30	1	31	2.5
Retail and wholesale stores.....	77	54	131	10.7
Miscellaneous services.....	113	97	210	17.1
Public administration (government employment).....	27	19	46	3.7
Other employment.....	45	32	77	6.5

Source: U. S. Census; Population