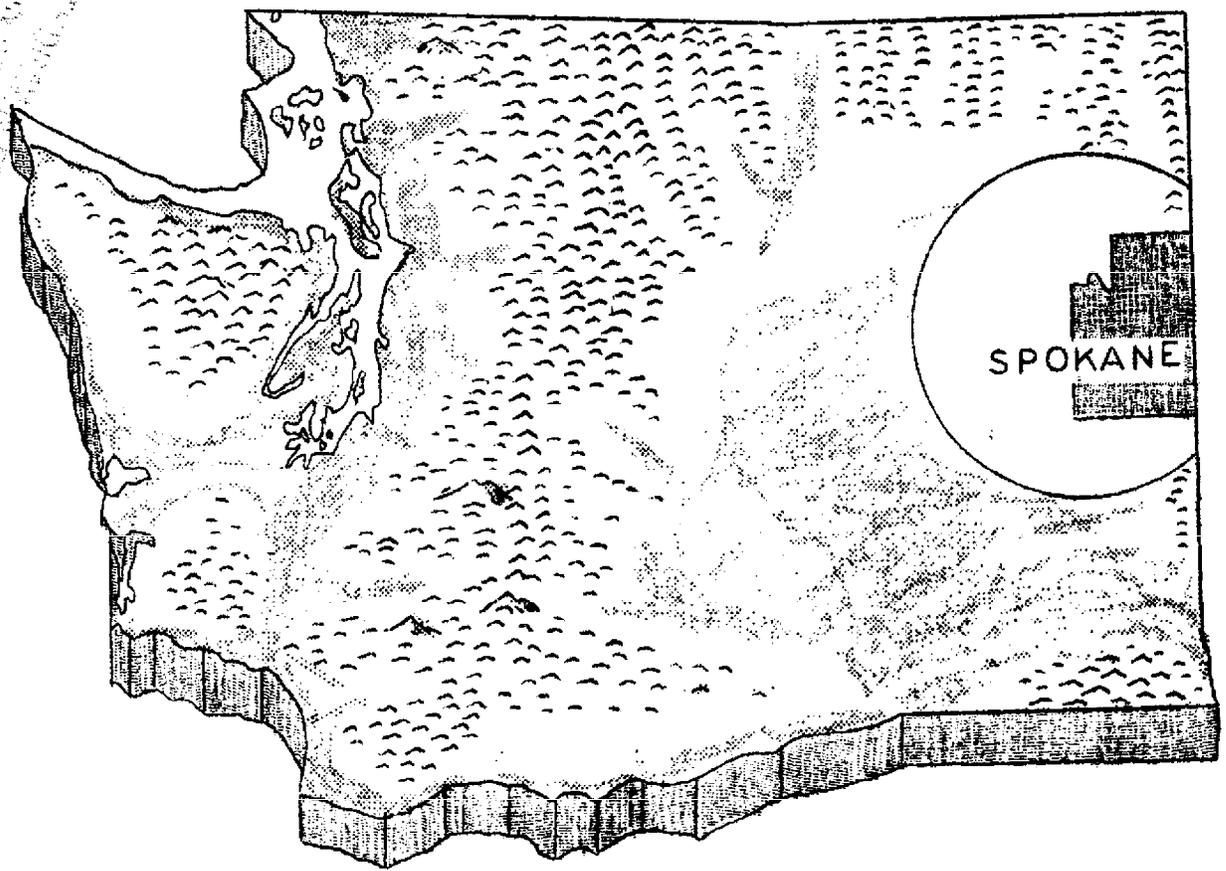


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SPOKANE COUNTY AGRICULTURE WASHINGTON

COUNTY AGRICULTURAL DATA SERIES
1956



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Sverre N. Omdahl, Director

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Agricultural Marketing Service
S. R. Newell

WASHINGTON CROP AND LIVESTOCK REPORTING SERVICE
348 Federal Office Building
Seattle 4, Washington

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FOREWORD

This book on Spokane County is one of an original series being devoted to the history and present nature of agriculture in each of the thirty-nine counties of the State of Washington.

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 both in private enterprise and public service. Comprehensive knowledge of land resources, population, and agricultural-economic trends in a local area such as Spokane County is of great value. This book will be useful for reference in public and private instruction by social studies teachers in Spokane County schools. It has been devised also to inform adults interested in knowing more about their immediate area, as well as persons and enterprises concerned with agricultural production and marketing or prospective settlement and investment in the county.

Carefully selected geographic facts, agricultural history, population trends and statistical data are included to give an over-all appreciation of Spokane County. The enumerations of the United States Censuses of Population and Agriculture since 1860 and recent estimates of the Washington State Census Board are summarized to give a perspective of development since the establishment of Spokane County in 1858. Facts on topography, soil, climate and forests 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, Estimates Division, Agricultural Marketing Service, United States Department of Agriculture. Supervision, research and cartographic illustration was performed by Dr. Woodrow R. Clevinger, Market Analyst, Washington State Department of Agriculture. Mr. Richard Perry, of the Washington State Department of Agriculture, and Bruce M. Graham, Robert McGregor, and Christian A. Stokstad, Agricultural Statisticians, Agricultural Marketing Service, United States Department of Agriculture, gave valuable assistance. Vladimir Kovalik, University of Washington graduate student in geography, compiled most of the statistical tables and graphs. The clerical staff of the Washington Crop and Livestock Reporting Service, under supervision of Miss Phyllis C. Robinson, prepared tabular material for the book.

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PART I

History of Spokane County Agriculture

Introduction

Spokane County, at the center of the "Inland Empire", includes parts of the Spokane Valley plains, Okanogan and Selkirk Highlands and fertile Palouse Hills of eastern Washington. Its land area is 1,763 square miles, or approximately 1,128,320 acres. It is twenty-first in size among the thirty-nine Washington counties, and is larger than the State of Rhode Island. Fur traders, American missionaries, and the Spokane Indians practiced some of the earliest agriculture in the Pacific Northwest in this area between 1810 and 1840. With a good location for marketing in the railroad and industrial center of Spokane, second largest city of the Evergreen State, the farmlands in Spokane County have been highly developed for grain, alfalfa, fruit, vegetables, livestock and poultry.

Typical of most counties in Pacific Coast states, Spokane has grown in population, number of farms and volume of crop and livestock production. Settlers and industrial workers have been attracted by land and employment opportunities. Since the first Census in 1860 when the county had 996 persons, the population has grown to an estimated 255,900 in 1955, ranking third among Washington counties. During this period the value of land and buildings and the productivity of farms have increased many times over. Spokane County ranked seventh in the state in 1954 in value of all farm products sold, and its farmers marketed products worth an estimated \$22,307,056 during that year. In rural farm population with 12,269 persons, the county ranked eighth in the state in 1950.

History 1/

The Washington Territorial Legislature first created Spokane County on January 29, 1858, from the northeastern part of Walla Walla County. In 1864 Spokane was reorganized as part of Stevens County. In 1879 it was re-created, again as Spokane County. In 1883, when Lincoln County was sub-divided from it,

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Spokane County received its present boundaries. The city of Spokane was established as the county seat.

Spokane, in the language of the Spokane Indians, means "Chief of the Sun". This name was given by early traders to the river, the first fur trading settlement and to the Indian inhabitants. It was derived from a famous chief of the Middle Spokane Indians, Illim Spokaneee. Spokane Garry, the outstanding Indian in the early history of this area, was a son of Spokaneee.

British and American fur traders first arrived in the Spokane area in 1810 and 1812. The British traders, organized as the Canadian Northwest Fur Company, built a post called Spokane House in 1810 at the junction of the Spokane and Little Spokane Rivers. A Scot, Finan McDonald and a French Indian, Jacques Finlay, built the post and were the first white men to settle in the Spokane Valley. John George McTavish, another Canadian Scot, became the resident manager of Spokane House. In 1812, John Jacob Astor's Pacific Fur Company established the American's Fort Spokane in the same locality. Called the Astorians, the earliest American fur traders were John Clarke, Ross Cox and Alexander Ross. The rival fur companies were eventually purchased by the British of Hudson's Bay Company and British influence was dominant in north-eastern Washington until after 1846. Fort Spokane and Spokane House were abandoned between 1816 and 1825 and fur trading centered at Fort Colville on the Columbia River under a monopoly of Hudson's Bay Company.

The fur traders and the Indians of the area practiced a subsistence type of vegetable and wheat farming and some horse and cattle raising. Canadian fur traders brought vegetable and grain seeds and seed potatoes from Fort Williams, Canada, on Lake Superior. The Americans brought seed and cattle from Astoria, Oregon, and the Hudson's Bay Company brought seed and cattle from Fort Vancouver.

The earliest American Protestant missionaries led by Elkana Walker made an important contribution to early Spokane Valley agriculture. Walker's group moved into the area in 1839 from the Walla Walla Valley Waillatpu Mission of Marcus Whitman. They came to convert the Spokane, Coeur d'Alene and Flathead Indians who occupied the Spokane River Valley. One objective was to interest these horsemen and hunters in a more settled farm type of life. Aided by Indian Chief, Spokane Garry, the Walker group built the Tshimaikan Mission in the upper Little Spokane River Valley in the south of present Stevens County.

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

- (1) Reverend Jonathan Edwards, An Illustrated History of Spokane County, Washington, 1900.
- (2) Lucile F. Fargo, Spokane Story. New York. Columbia University Press, 1950.
- (3) Richard N. Perry, The Counties of Washington. Olympia, State of Washington, Secretary of State, 1943. (Mimeographed).
- (4) The Spokesman Review, Washington Territorial Edition, 1853-1953. Spokane, May 10, 1953.
- (5) Writers Program, WPA. Washington, A Guide to the Evergreen State. Published in 1941. Sponsored by Washington Historical Society.

Vegetable gardens, grain fields, poultry pens and cattle pastures surrounded the mission. Some of the friendly Spokane Indians took up agriculture, but a majority of them pursued hunting and plant gathering and the trading of wild horses grazed in the Palouse Hills grasslands. In the late 1840's and early 1850's hostility by the Cayuse, Yakima, Palouse and other eastern Washington Indian tribes virtually halted white settlement in the Spokane Valley and elsewhere in the upper Columbia Basin.

Two important events opened the way for American agricultural settlement in the Spokane Basin. The Treaty of 1846 established the present Canadian boundary, ending British claims to the land and enabling Americans to take up farms without dispute. Indian hostility to white immigration was ended by a council and treaty on Latah Creek, September 23, 1858. The treaty was signed by Spokane Chiefs, Spokane Garry and Big Star, and by Colonel George Wright of the U.S. Army, who had defeated the Spokane Indians in a battle at Four Lakes a few miles to the southwest of present Spokane City. Many Spokane Indians remained on the land and took up agriculture as the white immigration began to fill up the farm lands of the area.

Cattle raising and mining became the leading industries in early Spokane County. Attracted by the grasslands, Francis Owens moved some 600 head of cattle and 500 head of horses out of Montana into the Spokane Valley in 1853. Another prominent pioneer cattleman was the Indian Chief, Spokane Garry. Two others, J. J. Downing and S. R. Scranton, arrived and homesteaded at Spokane Falls in 1871. In 1872, Richard H. Benjamin built a sawmill at Spokane Falls. In 1878 James Glover filed a plat for the city of Spokane Falls which became the present city of Spokane. By 1880 the young city had a population of about 100 persons and the entire county contained 4,262 people.

While Spokane City was growing, the mine fields of the Colville Basin in the mountains of northeastern Washington and the Coeur d'Alenes of Idaho attracted many new immigrants. Spokane Falls became an outfitting point for gold rushers entering the mountains of northern Idaho and Washington. The mining boom caused an expansion of lumber and flour milling at Spokane Falls. Pioneer grain farmers in the Big Bend and Palouse Hills area found a good market at Spokane. By 1887 flour mills of Spokane were producing 300 barrels per day. The large number of horses and mules used in logging and mining created a growing demand for hay and grain.

A major turning point in the agricultural settlement of Spokane County came in 1881. In that year the Northern Pacific transcontinental railway reached Spokane. A large number of land settlers called "sodbusters" came overland and took up homesteads in the Big Bend and the Palouse in the 1880's. Under the Homestead Act of 1862 many farms of 160 acres were taken up in the grasslands and timbered mountain valleys. Later changes in this law allowed families to homestead 320 and 640 acres of dryland, or land which could not be irrigated. The Northern Pacific Railway sold land from its land grant and encouraged immigration from eastern states. This settlement ended the period of the open range for large stock raisers.

The homesteaders founded a number of agricultural towns in the Palouse region of southern Spokane County and the Big Bend Plateau in the western portion of the area. Cheney, Rockford, Latah, Waverley and Spangle grew during

the 1880's as farm centers and as milling and shipping points for grain and sugar beets. Other villages such as Deer Park, Millwood, Colbert and Elk grew as a result of lumbering and part-time farming along a Great Northern Railway branchline north of Spokane.

The Census of 1890 showed a large growth in population from 4,000 in 1880 to over 37,000 in 1890. Industrial expansion in the Spokane urban area and in the farm and forest lands has resulted in continuous population growth. The period 1900 to 1910 was one of rapid land settlement in which the county population more than doubled. Rapid development of commercial wheat farming in the Big Bend and Palouse districts occurred during the period. The Northern Pacific, Great Northern and the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railways all encouraged immigration. The railroads also extended their services to nearly all farming localities, thus providing for efficient marketing of grain, hay and livestock.

In 1940 Spokane County entered another vigorous period of population growth which was mainly industrial in nature. Attracted by plentiful hydro-electric power and good rail transportation, a number of metal, lumber and food processing industries were located in the Spokane urban area, creating larger payrolls. Large Air Force and Navy installations brought other workers. County population increased about 91,000 following 1940 to 255,900 in 1955. The city of Spokane grew from 122,000 to 182,000. Agriculture in the county was greatly influenced by this growing market. More specialization in vegetable, berry and poultry farming became a noticeable trend after 1940.

In the pioneering of agricultural science in Spokane County, the work of experiment stations, county extension agents and other research groups has played an important role. Successful varieties of plants and seeds and methods of animal husbandry and dry land farming have been proved and demonstrated by two experiment stations directed by Washington State College. These are the Washington Experiment Station at Pullman and the Dry Land Experiment Station at Lind, Washington. Hybrid wheat studies and developments by W. J. Spillman begun in the 1890's at Pullman, has had an important influence on wheat farming. This station started releasing hybrid varieties in 1907 to wheat farmers of Spokane and other eastern Washington areas. Its work has been continuous and two wheat varieties--Elmar and Brevor--released in 1949 accounted for about three-fourths of the 1955 crop. Advancement of Spokane County farming has been aided by the farm-to-farm work of the Extension Service based at Spokane and also by the Agricultural Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture at Pullman. The Pacific Northwest Crop Improvement Association, combining the work of agricultural scientists, marketing specialists and private grain dealers and flour millers, has also influenced the grain farming industry.

Surveys by federal and state scientists have provided basic information on the soils and land capabilities of the county. In 1921 the U.S. Department of Agriculture in cooperation with the Washington State Geological Survey published the first detailed soil map and soil description of the area. In 1949 the Agricultural Experiment Station, State College of Washington, published a detailed economic land use classification map of Spokane County.