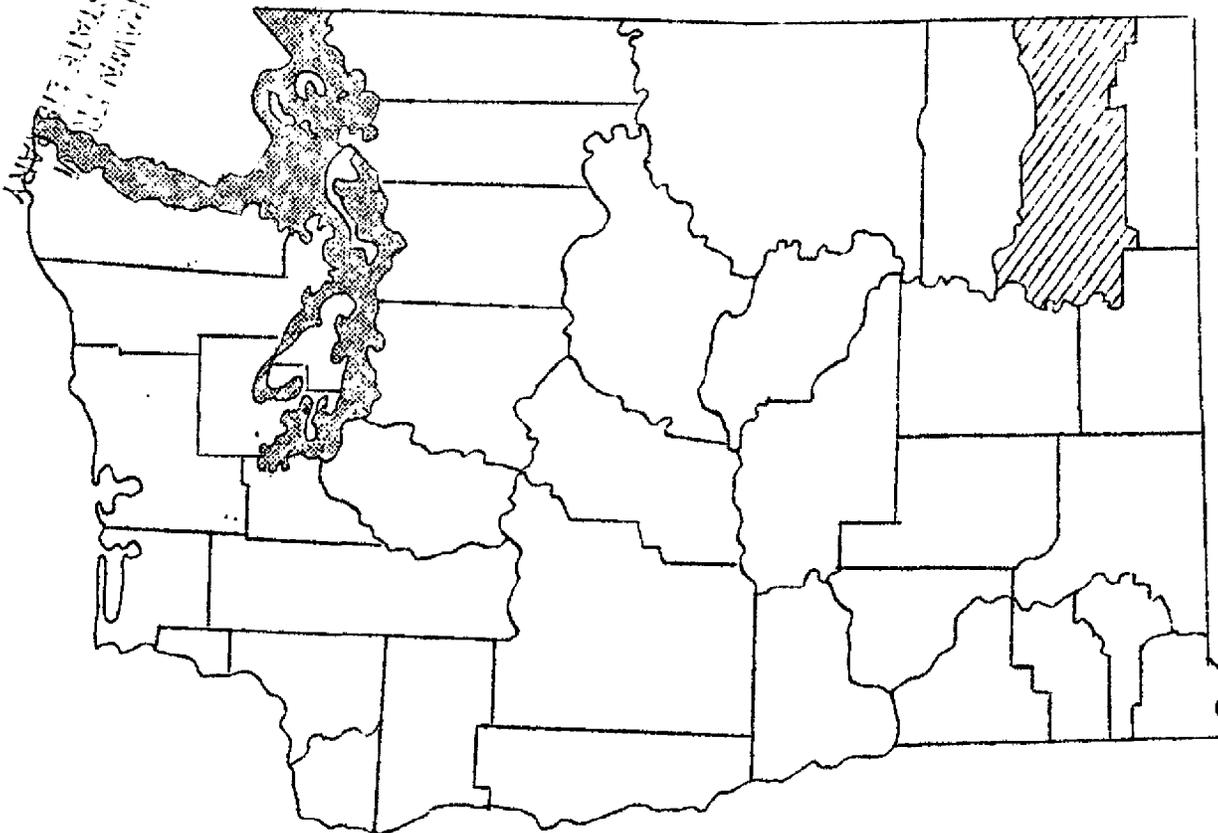


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STEVENS COUNTY AGRICULTURE WASHINGTON

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COUNTY AGRICULTURAL DATA SERIES
1954



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Joseph D. Dwyer, Director

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Statistical Reporting Service
Harry C. Trelogan

WASHINGTON CROP AND LIVESTOCK REPORTING SERVICE
348 Federal Office Building
Seattle, Washington 98104

FOREWORD

This bulletin on Stevens 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 Stevens 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 overall appreciation of Stevens County. Enumerations of the United States Censuses of Population and Agriculture are summarized to give a perspective of development since the establishment of Stevens County in 1863. 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 Stevens County bulletin were performed by George K. Saito, Research Analyst, Washington State Department of Agriculture. Editing of the first draft of the present bulletin was done by Emery C. Wilcox. Agricultural 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
August 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.

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PART I

HISTORY OF STEVENS COUNTY AGRICULTURE

Introduction

Stevens County is located in northeastern Washington bordering Canada. It is the land of the upper Columbia River tributary valleys and of the forested Okanogan Highlands. The area has been developed into one that supports an expanding agricultural economy based primarily on livestock, forest products and feed crops.

Stevens County's area of 2,551 square miles (approximately 1,632,640 acres) makes it fifth in size among the thirty-nine Washington counties. The county is roughly rectangular in shape and is about 90 miles long from north to south and 30 to 40 miles from east to west. According to the 1959 Census of Agriculture, about 50 percent of the county was in farms and around 6 percent or 98,939 acres was in harvested cropland. Over three-fourths of the county is in forests but a large portion of it is pastured woodland. Topography and climate restrict the number and acreage of crops in the county. Crops, however, when added to the local livestock industry, make agriculture a major segment of the total economic resource base of Stevens County. In little over a century, settlers of varied origins and nationalities have developed over 1,600 farms. The economic history has been characterized by a steady growth of agriculture along with employment in mining, the forest products industry and the service trades.

History 1/

Named in honor of Isaac I. Stevens, first territorial Governor of Washington, Stevens County was created by the Legislature of the Territory on January 20, 1863. Formed from the northeastern part of Walla Walla County, it became the mother county from which Spokane, Whitman, Okanogan, Ferry and Pend Oreille Counties were created. The present borders of Stevens were not fixed until 1911 when Pend Oreille County was established. Boundaries were set up to include settlements along the Colville River and the farms on the eastern bank of the north Columbia River above its junction with the Spokane River.

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Agriculture in the area was started by the Hudson's Bay Fur Company traders when they established the Fort Colville trading post in 1816. The Company brought garden seeds, grain and livestock from the Red River Valley of Canada. The Hudson's Bay Company built a grist mill at Meyers Falls on the lower Colville River in 1819. This first flour mill in the Pacific Northwest developed an early interest in grain farming among the whites and Indians in the Colville Valley. It is recorded that an English scientist, David Douglas, serving with the fur trading company, and Angus McDonald, a fur trader, brought a foundation herd of cattle and hogs to Fort Colville before 1826. Agriculture in those days was for local use and bartering.

Early missionaries working among the Indians also pioneered agriculture in the Stevens County area. Aided by the Spokane Indians and their Chief, Spokane Garry, a group of American Protestant missionaries led by Elkhana Walker built Tshimakain Mission in 1838 on Chamokan Creek near Springdale in southern Stevens County. The Americans established vegetable gardens, grain fields, poultry pens and started herds of cattle. Some Indians took up agriculture and a more sedentary life. Catholic missionaries, Fathers Peter DeSmet and Ravoli, built St. Paul's Mission near Kettle Falls in 1845 and also demonstrated agriculture to the Colville Indians. In this early period, fur trading was the main industry and land settlement was very slow. There was some agricultural trade in flour, grain, bacon and dried beef which was exported by boats on the Columbia and by overland wagons.

In the 1840's and 1850's general Indian hostility in the Inland Empire region and a territorial dispute between America and England slowed American settlement. The Cayuse Indian War and the enmity of the Yakima Confederacy led to closure of the area for American land settlers.

Two important events opened the way for American agricultural settlement along the banks of the northern Columbia River and the Colville, Spokane and Kettle River Basins. The Treaty of 1846 established the present Canadian boundary and ended British claims to the important Colville Valley, the present main farming region of Stevens County. A treaty signed by the Spokane Indians and the U. S. Army at Latah Creek in Spokane County in 1858 did much to bring peace to north-eastern Washington.

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

- (1) Ben Burgunder, "Recollections of the Inland Empire". The Washington Historical Quarterly, Washington Historical Society. Vol. 17, pp. 190-210, April 1926. Published by University of Washington Press, Seattle.
- (2) The Chewelah Independent, Chewelah, Washington, Golden Anniversary Edition, 1903-1953, June 11, 1953.
- (3) The Colville Examiner, Colville, Washington. Thomas Graham, "Stevens County Fifty Years Ago", a series of articles giving many details about Colville Valley pioneer farming. 1928-1929.
- (4) Mrs. L. C. P. Haskins. "History of Stevens County". Unpublished paper in Northwest History Collection. Library, University of Washington, Seattle.
- (5) Richard M. Perry, "The Counties of Washington". Secretary of State, State of Washington, Olympia, 1943 (Mimeographed). See section on Stevens County.

The Colville Indian Agency and the Colville and Spokane Reservations were established in following years. The Colville Reservation stretching across southern Okanogan and Ferry Counties covered 1,140,223 acres and became the home of the Colville Indians. Okanogan, Sanpoil and Nespelem Indians also settled in this reservation. In southern Stevens County the Spokane Reservation of 138,068 acres was established for the Spokane and Colville Indians. Indians of the Colville Indian Agency are important today in the Stevens County livestock industry and utilize a large grazing area.

A "boom" period of mining and filing on free lands under the Oregon Land Law (Donation Land Act) of 1859 brought most of the early pioneer Americans to Stevens County. A gold strike made near Colville in 1854 was the beginning of a long period of mining development in the Colville Basin. In the 1860's, 70's and 80's, the mining industry and three flour mills created a valuable local market for wheat, fresh provisions, hay and grains. Remoteness of the area required that most food and livestock feed be purchased locally. Growth was rapid in the Chewelah and Northport mining districts where mining attracted an industrial population.

In the 1850-1870 period of homesteading, important contributions toward the progress of agriculture were made by several pioneers. A German immigrant family, the Oppenheims, led by Marcus Oppenheimer, established a lumber and grist mill at Marcus in 1862. The Oppenheims also brought in the first thoroughbred swine from Walla Walla Valley in the 1860's. Louthier W. Meyers operated a flour and grist mill at Meyers Falls on the Colville River and purchased local grain. John Hofstetter and John McGleod brought the first sheep to the Colville Valley in the 1850's.

The livestock industry reached early importance as the following men developed herds of beef cattle and horses at Chewelah and the upper Colville Valley: Peter King, Norbert Dupuis, George McCrear, Joe Morrel, Thomas Brown and James Monaghan. The latter two homesteaded the townsite of Chewelah. Early livestockmen also grew hay, grain and potatoes which were sold to the U. S. Army garrison at Fort Colville and to local flour mills. Long cattle drives were made to The Dalles, Oregon; Kootenai, Idaho; and to Spokane. Many early farmers worked part-time at wagon freighting between the Colville Valley and Walla Walla over the Mullan Road. Draft horses as well as riding horses were an important trade item. Before 1870 the Colville Valley was the most important livestock producing region in north-eastern Washington. It was also producing about 20,000 bushels of commercial grain per year.

The completion of a branch railroad from Spokane to Colville in the late 1880's led to increased settlement of farm lands. The Great Northern was constructed northward from Spokane through the Loon Lake and Springdale districts to the mining fields at Chewelah and on northward through the Colville Valley to the Canadian border above Northport to connect with the Canadian Pacific Railway and the mining fields in the Trail, British Columbia area. Railroads brought an influx of miners and land settlers who obtained free or cheap lands under the Homestead Act of 1862 and the Timber and Stone Act. Some settlers purchased small tracts from railroad land grants and timber companies. Pioneer farmers were freed of isolation and the problem of making long overland drives of livestock as the railroads spread. By 1900 Colville Valley ranchers were able to market readily cream and perishable crops in Spokane. Agriculture expanded and diversified. The population of miners, livestockmen, lumbermen and tradesmen increased nearly ten times between 1880 and 1900, reaching a total of 10,543.

As a result of increased mining, lumbering and other nonfarm work along the Great Northern Railway at Chewelah and Colville, Stevens County reached its peak of population in 1910 with 25,297. In 1911, a few thousand settlers in the Clark Fork Valley (now Pend Oreille County) petitioned for a separate county because of the inconvenience of a long, roundabout way southward around the Pend Oreille Mountain Range to reach the county seat at Colville. After 1910, large, modern mining operations, lumber mills, the Grand Coulee Dam construction and some agricultural processing plants, together with a well established livestock and dairy industry, stabilized the population at between 18,000 and 20,000.

Between 1880 and 1910 a dairy industry developed in the Colville Valley. It centered primarily in southern Stevens County in the Chewelah-Springdale area. The W. B. Stuart creamery and cheese factory at Chewelah provided an early local market and an impetus for the expansion of the industry. Later, many producers joined the Inland Empire Dairymen's Association. Cream and butter moved to the Spokane market and in recent years the area has become a vital part of the Spokane milkshed.

Present-day Stevens County agriculture has become more specialized. Livestock, dairying, farm forest products and field crops are the major items in the county's agricultural economy. The value of all farm products sold from Stevens County farms increased greatly from 1940 when it was worth \$1,804,586 to \$5,148,871 in 1949 and \$9,512,472 in 1959. Those who have contributed much to the area's agricultural progress include the Washington Cattlemen's Association, Inland Empire Dairymen's Association, the Crop Improvement Association and the Washington State Extension Service with its experiment station at Pullman.