

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 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 this 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.

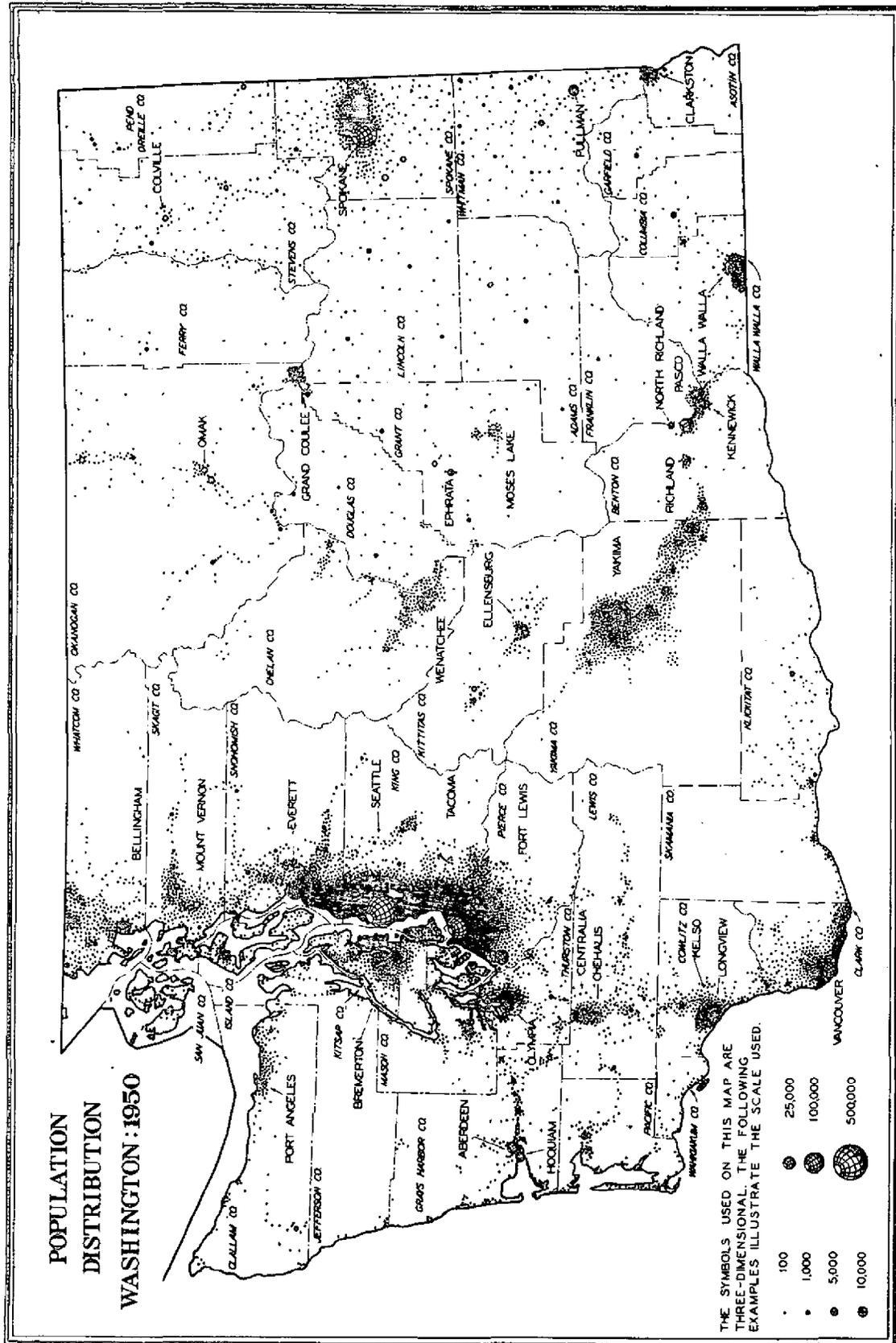
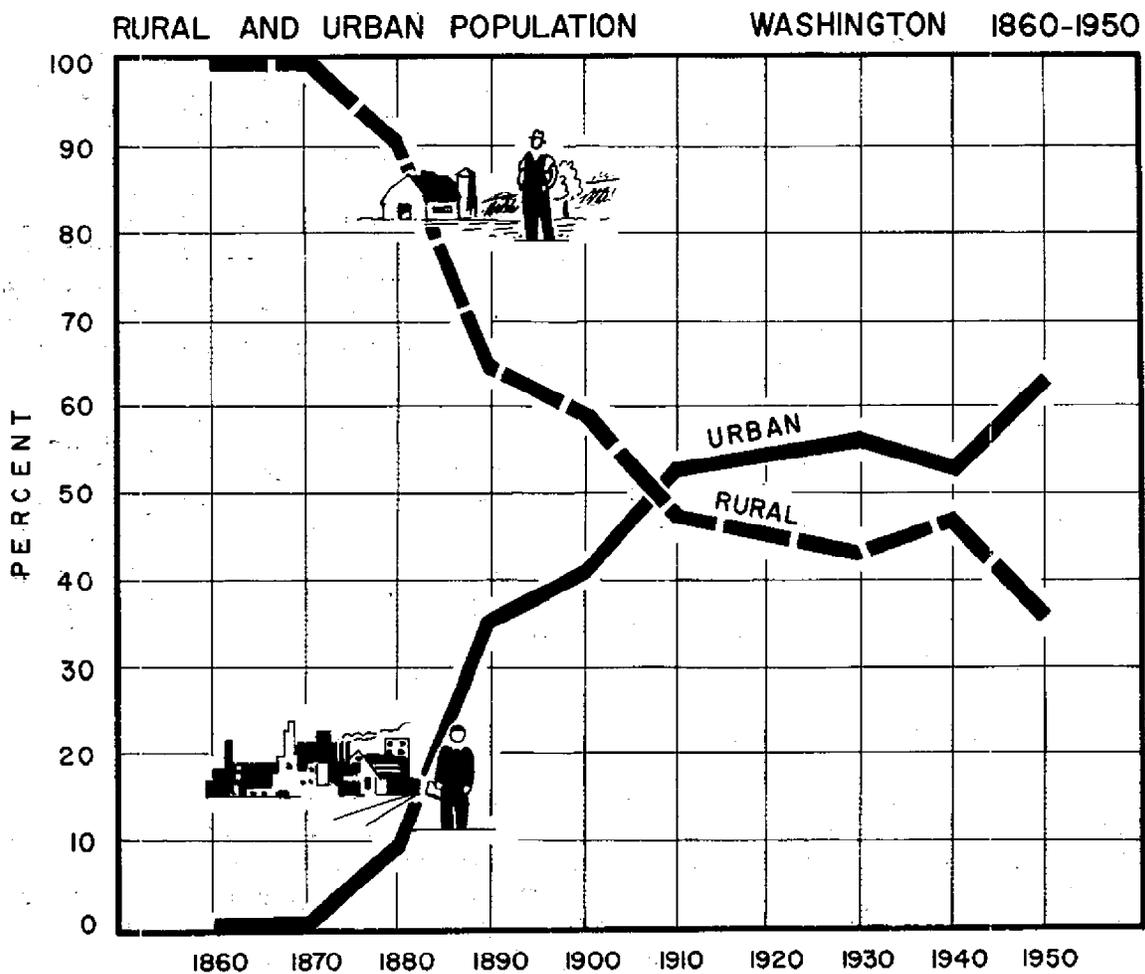
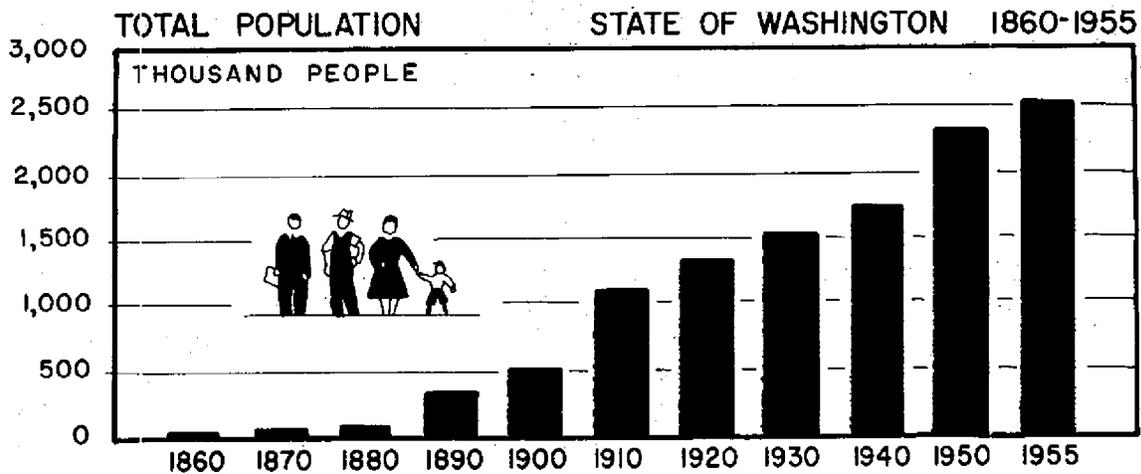


Figure 6.- DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION IN WASHINGTON, 1950 (Map by courtesy of Population Research Office, Washington State Census Board).



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

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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 Thurston County

A Washington State Census Board estimate of population in 1955 placed Thurston County eleventh among Washington counties with a total of 47,200 persons. Population has grown steadily since the first Census in 1860 when only 1,507 people lived within the county, which had much larger boundaries than at present. Since 1890 population has been well over half rural, living in cities and villages of less than 2,500, rural residences and on farms. City dwellers and persons living in towns, suburbs and in country residences far outnumber persons living on farms. In 1950 the urban population in Olympia and Tumwater numbered 18,544 or 41 percent of the county total. The rural non-farm

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 (43,000), Vancouver 41,950),

population numbered 17,725 or 40 percent. Persons living on farms were a minority of only 8,615 or 19 percent. In farm population Thurston County ranked thirteenth in the state.

Table 2.- Population of Thurston County
1860-1955

Census Year	Population	Percent Rural	Percent Urban
1860	1,507	100	0
1870	2,246	100	0
1880	3,270	100	0
1890	9,675	51.5	48.5
1900	9,927	61.1	38.9
1910	17,581	60.3	39.7
1920	22,366	65.2	34.8
1930	31,351	62.6	37.4
1940	37,285	64.5	35.5
1950	44,884	58.7	41.3
1955 ^{1/}	47,200	56.7	43.3

^{1/} 1955 figures are estimates of Washington State Census Board

Source: U.S. Census, Population

Settlement of cut-over lands and employment in manufacturing, commercial trades and state government service at Olympia have all contributed to the steady pace of population growth. The rate of increase is somewhat typical of all counties bordering Puget Sound. A steady rate of immigration into the general industrial area of Puget Sound has caused an increase in Thurston County. Olympia and Tumwater, however, have absorbed most of the Thurston growth since 1940 and the inland lumber towns and farming districts have not gained substantially in recent years.

Table 3.- Population of Incorporated Places
Thurston County, 1910-1956

Incorporated City or Town	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1956 ^{1/}
Bucoda	—	442	703	541	473	471
Olympia	6,996	7,795	11,733	13,254	15,819	17,300
Rainier	—	—	—	—	331	291
Tenino	1,038	850	938	952	969	1,000
Tumwater	490	472	793	955	2,725	3,406
Yelm	—	—	384	378	470	450

^{1/} Populations for 1956 are estimates of the Washington State Census Board, April 1, 1956.

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

Most of the residents of Thurston County live in six incorporated places. Olympia and Tumwater, adjacent to each other, have grown steadily. Olympia went up from 13,254 in 1940 to 17,300 by 1955 and Tumwater grew from 955 to 3,406. Tumwater is both an industrialized and residential suburb of Olympia. Centers of part-time farming and lumbering such as Rainier, Tenino and Yelm have increased only slightly in recent censuses. Bucoda and Tenino, once more active lumber and mining towns, are still below previous population peaks reached in 1930 and 1910.

Typical of many counties in western United States, Thurston has been a melting pot of many nationalities who have migrated from Canada, Europe and Asia to seek jobs and land. In 1890 about 20 persons out of each 100 were from foreign countries. European immigrants from Germany, England, Ireland and Scandinavian countries were numerous with Canadians the largest in number. All these people contributed much to development of dairying, livestock raising and horticultural specialty farming. Following 1920, foreign immigration decreased and by 1950 foreign-born persons made up only about 6 percent of the county population.

Other population groups enumerated by the 1950 Census include American Negroes, American Indians and American citizens of Japanese and Chinese origin. With the exception of the Indians who live on the Nisqually and Chehalis Reservations in rural areas, most of these minor population groups live in the Olympia-Tumwater urban area and very few are in agriculture.

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

Country of Birth	1890	1920	1950
England and Wales.....	250	309	249
Scotland.....	63	80	55
Northern Ireland.....	--	--	4
Ireland (Eire).....	224	110	52
Norway.....	65	179	216
Sweden.....	128	312	284
Denmark.....	54	131	64
Netherlands.....	4	26	--
Switzerland.....	18	57	41
France.....	26	38	29
Germany.....	345	331	212
Poland.....	2	40	41
Czechoslovakia.....	4	--	21
Austria.....	10	58	42
Yugoslavia.....	--	28	9
Russia (U.S.S.R.).....	30	37	122
Finland.....	--	375	209
Italy.....	54	100	55
Canada-French.....	--	48	24
Canada-Other.....	403	570	686
All other countries...	205	191	242
Totals	1,885	3,020	2,657
Percent foreign-born	19.5	13.5	6.0

Source: U.S. Census, Population

Employment in Thurston County is well-diversified among six principal occupations. Agriculture ranks fifth, employing 1,483 persons according to the 1950 Census. Only about one-tenth of the wage earners and the self-employed of the area are engaged in farming. Manufacturing, which includes lumber, wood products, processed foods and beverages and a variety of minor products, is the major source of wages and incomes. Manufacturing employed a total of 3,390 or over one-fifth of all workers in 1950. Miscellaneous services was second with 3,072 workers. Employment in public administration (the payrolls of the county, state and federal governments) was third largest with over 2,600 persons. Merchandising service in retail and wholesale stores ranked fourth with 2,522.

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

Types of Employment	Male Workers	Female Workers	Total Workers	Percent of Workers
<u>Total employed workers</u>	11,588	4,302	15,890	100.0
Agriculture.....	1,260	223	1,483	9.3
Forestry and fisheries.....	115	30	145	1.0
Mining.....	28	2	30	.2
Construction.....	1,303	49	1,352	8.5
Manufacturing.....	3,186	204	3,390	21.3
Transportation.....	518	29	547	3.4
Retail and wholesale stores.....	1,615	907	2,522	15.9
Miscellaneous services.....	1,598	1,474	3,072	19.3
Public administration (government employment).....	1,477	1,131	2,608	16.4
Other employment.....	488	253	741	4.7

Source: U.S. Census, Population