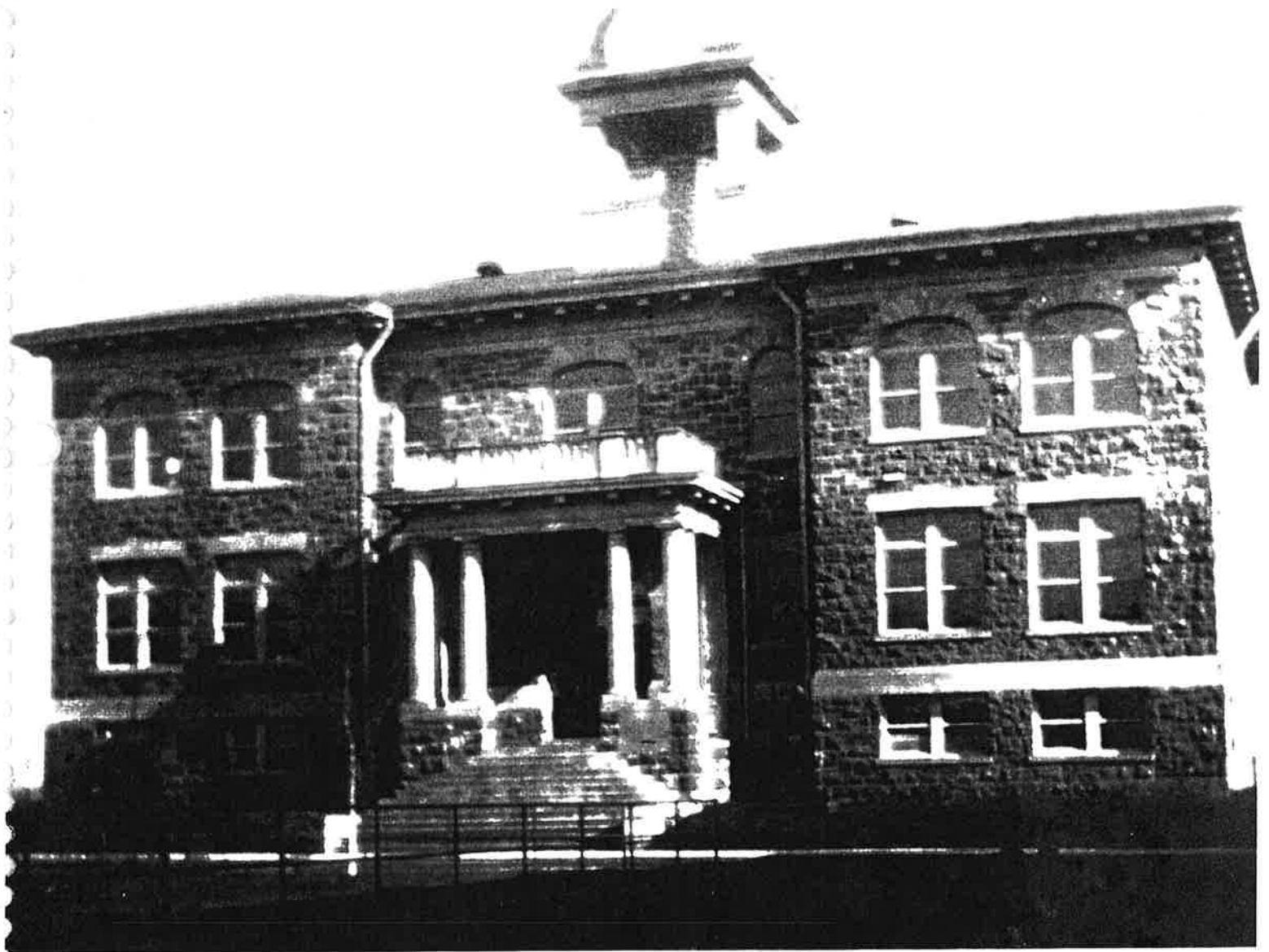


**THE DEVELOPMENT OF
COLUMBIA COUNTY
1792~1930**



**HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT
ANN FULTON, Ph.D.**

CULTURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF COLUMBIA
COUNTY, OREGON, 1792-1930**

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT

**BY
ANN FULTON, Ph.D.**

**REPORT TO
COLUMBIA COUNTY FORESTS, PARKS &
RECREATION DEPARTMENT**

**CULTURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
1540 SW DAVENPORT STREET
PORTLAND, OREGON 97201-2230**

DECEMBER 15, 1998

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This document is an Historic Context Statement for Columbia County that will be used as a tool in preservation planning. The study was funded by an Historic Preservation Fund Grant offered through the State Historic Preservation Office of Oregon and the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, under the provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. The study was co-administered by the Director of the Columbia County Forest, Parks & Recreation Department and the Executive Director of the Columbia-Pacific Economic Development District.

The research and writing of this report was carried out under the terms of a Professional Services Contract between Columbia County and Cultural Resources Management. Ann Fulton, President of Cultural Resources Management, was the principal researcher. Many individuals also provided historical information and attended meetings: Chuck Ashcroft, Inky Aulenbacher, Beth Bailey, Blanche Bangsund, Edith Bartel, Bob Brown, Virginia Burgh, Larry Cole, Lee Day, Vern Ferguson, Carol Hales, Richard Hunter, Don Johnson, Lillian Jones, Jeff King, Matt Laird, Karen Macfarlane, Sam McKinney, Geraldine Meyers, Tamie Maygra, Clara Neelands, Luanna Nelson, William Oester, Becky Partlow, Larry Rea, Evelyn Sanders, Mike Schmit, Sheila Sullilvan, Vivian Ure and Robb Wilson. These people had much historical information and were happy to share it. Their knowledge and assistance is very much appreciated.

The work of Bob Brown, Jeff King and Matt Laird in managing the project is especially appreciated. A very special thank you to Blanche Bangsund, Bob Brown, Larry Cole, Tamie Maygra, Geraldine Meyers, Vivian Ure and Robb Wilson for spending many hours driving around the county telling great stories and finding historic resources. Without the hours of driving and knowledge shared, many resources would not have been identified. Also, the guidance of State Historic Preservation Office staff members Kimberly Dunn and David Skilton has been very much appreciated. Without them, this work could not have gone forward. They spent time in the field advising on historic resources and many hours providing expert advice.

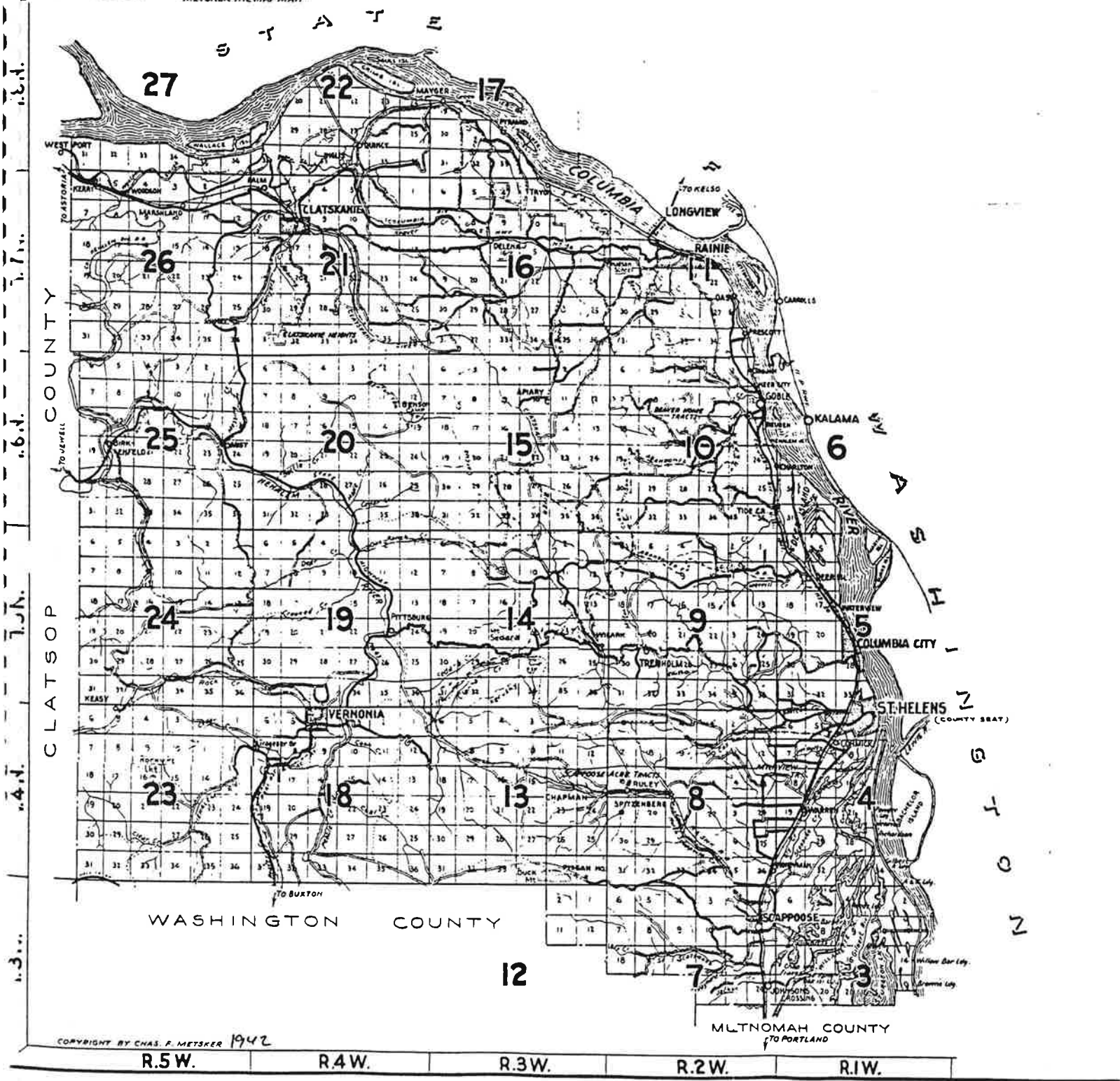
Thank you to all the other individuals who helped whose names are not listed here; they also offered historical information and assistance as the work proceeded. The dedication of everyone to preserving Columbia County's history is a gift that future generations will enjoy.

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NOTE-
 THIS ATLAS IS CAREFULLY COMPILED
 FROM GOVERNMENT, CITY, COUNTY AND STATE
 RECORDS AND THE MOST AUTHENTIC DATA
 OBTAINABLE. ANY CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM
 OR CORRECTIONS WILL BE GRATEFULLY
 RECEIVED.
 "METSKER THE MAP MAN"

Map of Columbia County



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R.5W. R.4W. R.3W. R.2W. R.1W.

SECTION I

HISTORIC CONTEXT DEFINITION

This Historic Context Statement was prepared for Columbia County to help fulfill the goal of preservation planning. An Historic Context Statement lays the groundwork for identifying, evaluating and preserving historic resources. The information on historic resources in this document will assist in preservation planning as Columbia County grows. A companion document to this Historic Context Statement is 60 intensive site surveys and an inventory of the county's historic resources.

HISTORIC CONTEXT THEME

The main theme of this report is the historical development of Columbia County from 1792 to 1930. The report identifies historic resources, including buildings, sites, structures, objects and districts existing in Columbia County. Columbia County was carved out of Washington County on January 16, 1854. Chinook and Clatskanie Indians developed rich cultures and trading networks here for hundreds of years before the county lines were drawn. Trappers and traders also traveled the land before the first white settlers arrived in the 1840s. Some of these settlers were town builders who tried to establish port cities to attract the trade along the Columbia River. The towns these early settlers started did not outrace Portland in the fight to dominate the river trade.

The most important source of the county's early development was logging and lumbering. Columbia County was the location of some of the state's earliest logging ventures and sawmills. The first sawmill probably was built in 1843 and by the 1880s Columbia County established itself as a leader in the timber industry. This industry was the mainstay of the economy until 1930.

Although some areas of Columbia County experienced short-lived spurts of growth between 1792 and 1930, overall the county's commercial, industrial and agricultural growth developed at a moderate rate. This pattern of medium-paced development helped to preserve some of the county's historic resources. There are few surviving historic resources associated with early settlement or the river trade, but more remain that are associated with the timber industry, agriculture and commercial growth.

The main theme of the historical development of Columbia County is subdivided into smaller ones. These themes are established by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the National Park Service. The broad themes characterizing Columbia County's development and architectural and historical features include: Exploration & Fur Trade, Native American & Euro-American Relations, Settlement, Agriculture, Transportation & Communication, Commerce & Urban Development, Industry & Manufacturing, Government and Culture. SHPO and the National Park Service also establish chronological periods. An effort has been made to minimize changes, but some

thematic and temporal changes have been made to better reflect the specific history of Columbia County.

The first chronological period in Columbia County's Historic Overview is Indians and Exploration (1792-1806). This period highlights the important role Indian tribes played in the era of exploration by white people. The dates were changed to reflect the actual dates of significance. Lieutenant William Broughton explored the shoreline that became part of Columbia County in 1792 and 1806 marks the Lewis and Clark expedition's return trip up the Columbia River. The second chronological period is Fur Trade and the Hudson's Bay Company (1807-1846). Because the Hudson's Bay Company's influence over the area was much more significant than missionary efforts, the title of the period was changed to reflect this. The dates were changed because the fur trade developed after the Lewis & Clark expedition ended.

The closing date for the era of Settlement, Statehood, and Steampower was changed because initial settlement of the county's interior continued through the early 1880s rather than ending in the mid-1860s. Following the Settlement, Statehood, and Steampower era, the county entered the era of Railroads and Industrial Growth (1884-1913). The opening date of this era was changed because mainline railroads first began operating here in 1884. The end date of the Motor Age was changed because the chronological period under study in this Historic Context Statement concludes in 1930.

SPATIAL BOUNDARY/PLACE

Columbia County, located in northwestern Oregon, comprises 687 square miles. It is bounded on the west by Clatsop County, on the south by Washington and Multnomah counties, on the east by Multnomah County and on the north by the Columbia River. St. Helens, the county seat, is approximately 35 miles from Portland and approximately 70 miles from Astoria. The county's Columbia River frontage of 62 miles is the longest of any of Oregon's counties. Columbia County's population in 1998 is 44,723 (PSU Center for Population Research and Census, 1998).

Columbia County is west of the northward extension of the Willamette Valley and within the Coast Range belt. The range is less defined than it is farther south; in Columbia County it consists of two hilly ridges. Except for a narrow strip at the foot of the Columbia River watershed and the narrow valley in the Nehalem River watershed, all the land of the county is hilly or mountainous.

The county's topography separates it into two main areas. The section that is more industrially and commercially developed and that has a greater population lies along the Columbia River watershed. From sea level at the river, the land slopes upward south and west to an elevation of approximately 1,200 feet that forms the divide between the Columbia and Nehalem river watersheds (Harper and Torgerson 1929: 1). Historically, the interior of the county was the location of a great logging industry founded on a dense

forest of Douglas firs. Towns such as Vernonia and small communities such as Mist developed along or near the Nehalem River. The lumber and shipping industries have dominated the area along the Columbia River; here larger towns such as Scappoose, St. Helens and Rainier grew.

TEMPORAL BOUNDARY: 1792-1930

The temporal boundary for the Columbia County historic context starts with the first well-documented exploration of the area by English explorers in 1792. The study ends in 1930 when the boom in the railroad logging era faded and the county felt the first effects of the Great Depression. The time frame of this study correlates with many of the historical events that were significant to Columbia County's development.

SECTION II

HISTORIC CONTEXT DESCRIPTION

The historic context for Columbia County is described through an Historic Overview that focuses on the people, places and events that contributed to the county's development within the temporal scope of this study. The historic context provides an opportunity to predict the type of historic properties likely to be found. The historic properties are categorized by resource types or generic classes of related historic properties. The distribution of resource types is assessed and their amount estimated. An inventory and intensive site survey of 60 sites, conducted as a companion study, confirms the presence of specific resource types. Following the historic context description, criteria for evaluating historic properties is presented.

HISTORIC OVERVIEW OF COLUMBIA COUNTY:

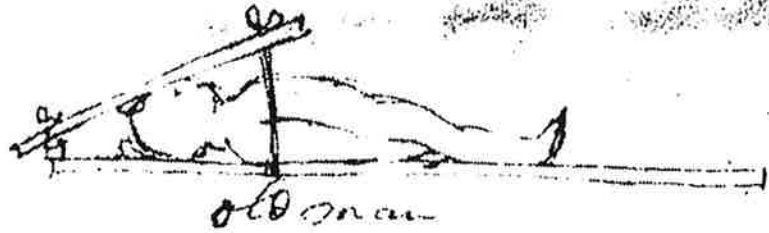
THE DEVELOPMENT OF COLUMBIA COUNTY, 1792-1930

INDIANS AND EXPLORATION, 1792-1806

Chinookans and Clatskanies

With the Columbia River as a border and trees as an abundant natural resource, the land that became Columbia County drew many people to it. Its first inhabitants were Chinookan and Clatskanie (Tlatskanai) Indians with their rich cultures. Later the land attracted explorers from many countries, fur traders, colonizers and American settlers. The county took its name from the Columbia River, "the Great River of the West" (Carey 1922: 910). The Pacific Ocean, a maritime highway for international trade, was only 70 miles from the county seat. The region also was west of the northward extension of the Willamette Valley, a place that by 1843 was a mecca for migrating American farmers. With its river transportation, stands of magnificent trees and proximity to the Willamette Valley and Pacific Ocean, the land had great potential.

The first people to live here came long before explorers from Europe, England or the United States. They descended from ancestors who crossed the land bridge from eastern Asia to North America 12,000 to 15,000 years ago. Tribes in this area tended to be oriented to one or more of the rivers (Dicken 1979: 42). The two main groups were the Chinookans who lived along the lower Columbia River and the Clatskanies who lived in the Upper Nehalem Valley and the headwaters of the Klaskanine and Clatskanie rivers. The Clatskanies probably came to the area between 900 and 1200 A.D. (Hajda 1987: 1). They and other groups intermarried and traded goods, traveling by way of the Columbia, Nehalem and Wilson rivers and probably Scappoose Creek (Hajda 1987: 1).



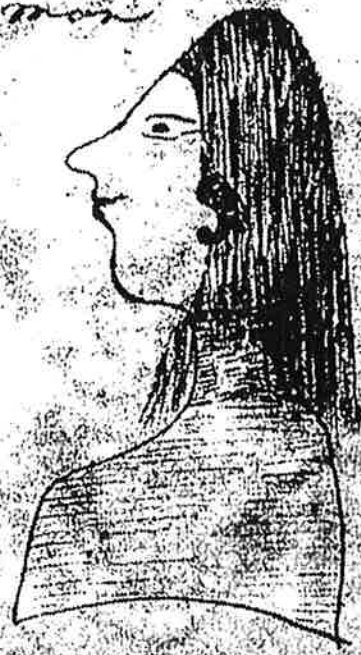
old man



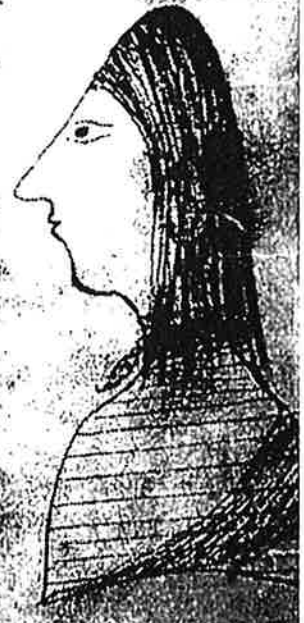
Head of Flat head Indians on the
Columbia the head flattened by
warping

Note The highest tide at Fort St. Johns rises to 12 feet
The most common on tide is from 8 to 9 feet and
all other parts of America rise twice in 24 hrs
something later every day

Young man



woman



FLATTENED HEADS OF ISLAND INDIANS,
Reproduced from Lewis and Clark Journals

Americans sometimes called the Chinookans on the lower Columbia River “Canoe Indians” due to their proficiency in making cedar dug-out canoes. White men also noted the names of many of the bands in the region; some of the bands they called the Skilluts, Kee-ass-sin-nos, and Cath-la-na-min-ims (Thwaites 1904-1905 IV: 218). The Chinookans shared a culture similar to the Northwest Coast Indians and those of the Columbia Plateau (Ruby and Brown 1986: 23). Members of the Lewis and Clark expedition reported seeing Indians on the lower Columbia with flattened heads.

The Chinookans on the lower Columbia built winter villages consisting of large permanent houses and smaller bark lodges; while hunting and gathering they made temporary camps. The Indians ate the deer, elk and wild fowl that roamed the forests and the salmon, sturgeon and other fish that swam the waters.

Chinookans on the lower Columbia were traders. They controlled the trade along the river until the arrival of white maritime traders ended their dominance. Because their language was a difficult one, the Chinookans adopted words to make themselves understood. This habit produced “Chinook Jargon,” a trading language with borrowings from many sources.

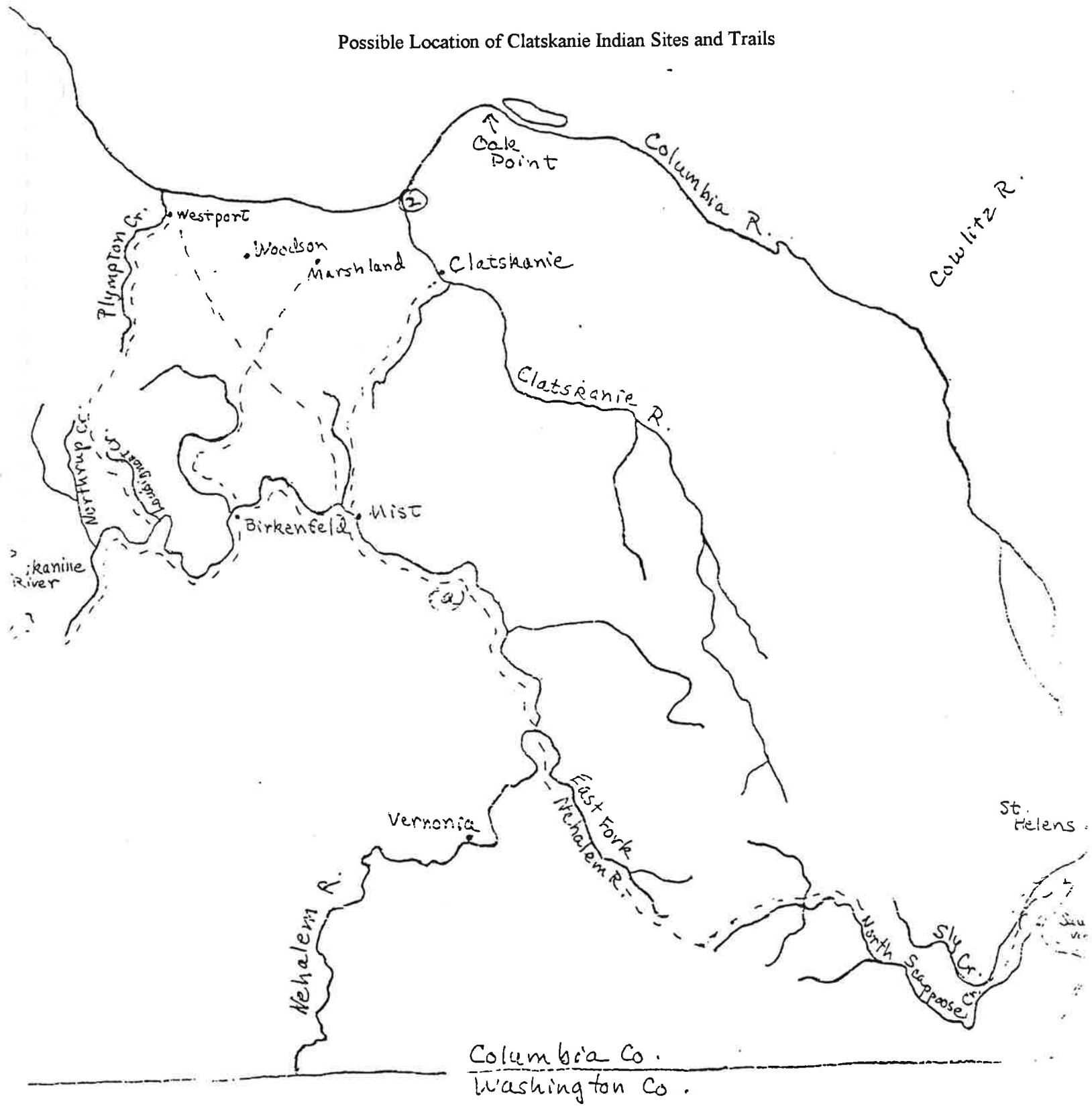
The Indians plied the trading highway of the Columbia River and went to the autumn rendezvous at the great falls of the river. The Chinookans also held a trading fair at Scappoose Plains (near the present city of Scappoose). Hudson’s Bay Company employees later told of seeing many Indians near Scappoose Creek and at the north end of the Plains. Here tribes gathered to feast, gamble, play games and trade (Watts 1984: 8).

The Indians also traveled extensively over two major trails. The most important one was a great highway (now called Logie Trail, located in Multnomah County) between the Columbia River and the Willamette Valley that had its beginning south of what is now the city of Scappoose; a second trail (later called the Territorial Road) traveled between the future cities of St. Helens and Hillsboro. Another Indian trail from St. Helens to a place close to Rocky Point ran between the low and high water mark next to the timber (Watts 1984: 8). Indians used these trails to hunt, trade and raid for ten thousand years. Later the Hudson’s Bay Company used the Logie Trail to get agricultural products from the Willamette Valley. Settlers traveled them extensively too.

The Clatskanies belonged to the Athapascan family and spoke an Athapascan dialect. Other Athapascan speakers in Oregon included Indians of the inland valleys such as the Upper Umpqua, Upper Coquille and Shasta Costa bands. According to oral tradition, the Clatskanies originally lived on the Skookumchuck River in what is now southwestern Washington. They were closely related to the Washington Kwalhioqua tribe and may have moved across the Columbia River because the hunting was better there (Hajda 1987: 1).

“Clatskanie” may have developed from a Chinookan word meaning “those of the region of small oaks;” possibly the name derived from a village the tribe occupied just below Oak Point. Or the word may have meant “a way to some place” and the place was in the

Possible Location of Clatskanie Indian Sites and Trails



Nehalem Valley, reached by ascending either the Klaskanine or the Clatskanie rivers (Hajda 1987: 3). Although the Clatskanies' main territory was the upland valley forests, seasonally they occupied the shore of the Columbia around the mouth of the Clatskanie River and visited the Portland Basin at Scappoose Creek (Hajda 1987: 1). The Clatskanies had many trails from the Nehalem River to the Columbia that the settlers later used. One trail led from Clatskanie to Mist, another from Marshland to Banzer's farm, and one from Westport up Plympton Creek to the headwaters of Northrup Creek (Hajda 1987: 4; CCH 1976: 30).

Theirs was a hunting and gathering culture, centered on game, berries, roots and seasonal salmon fishing. The Clatskanies built lodges of split cedar poles covered with bark. They clashed frequently with other tribes and with early explorers. The builders of Fort Astoria also fought with them. The Wilkes expedition, led by Lieutenant Charles Wilkes and commissioned by the federal government to make a report on the Oregon Country, observed the Clatskanies' fierceness. Mr. Hale, a member of the expedition, reported in 1841 that the Clatskanies were "somewhat more bold and hardy than the tribes on the river and coast, and at the same time, more wild and savage" (Wilkes 1845: 204).

Bruno de Heceta, Captain Robert Gray and the Vancouver Expedition

Bruno de Heceta, a Spaniard, was one of the first Europeans to see this land. He discovered the mouth of the Columbia River on August 14, 1775 but did not enter the river (Clarke 1905: 22). Contact with explorers such as Heceta probably caused the epidemic of smallpox in the late eighteenth century that killed the Indians by the thousands (Clark 1927: 60).

Almost two decades later Captain George Vancouver and his expedition passed the mouth of the Columbia but did not see it. On their way north they met the American trader Robert Gray and his ship the *Columbia Rediva*. Gray told Captain Vancouver that he thought there was a mighty river to the south but Vancouver doubted it. Gray decided to explore further. When the *Columbia Rediva* entered the river on May 11, 1792 it was the first documented trip by an English vessel. Gray named it for his vessel but did not take formal possession of the river for the United States.

Captain Vancouver decided to search for the river on his trip south. The *Discovery*, the larger of the two ships in the expedition, could not cross the bar when Vancouver found the river's mouth. The smaller *Chatham*, captained by Lieutenant William Broughton, managed the task. Broughton and his crew were the first English explorers to see future Columbia County (Carey 1971: 97-98).

They traveled upriver for a week, meeting Indians and naming many natural features, including Mt. Hood, for expedition members, friends and naval superiors. The Broughton party spent the night at a place Broughton named Point Sheriff (later called Green Point, near Mayger) on October 26, 1792. The Indians, following the Broughton party to watch its activities, stopped too. Broughton permitted one Indian to camp with them. Reverend J. Neilson Barry, an Episcopal minister interested in Columbia County history, studied

