

MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON
HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT

SEPTEMBER 1990

MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON
HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT

Prepared for Multnomah County, Oregon
Division of Planning and Development
Portland, Oregon

By

Koler/Morrison Planning Consultants
P.O. Box 445
Oregon City, Oregon 97045

September 1990

This project was funded by Multnomah County and by a matching grant from the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, in cooperation with the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office.

CREDITS

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Gladys McCoy, Chair
Pauline Anderson
Rick Bauman
Gretchen Kafoury
Sharron Kelley

DIVISION OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Lorna Stickel, Director
Joanne Garnett, Long Range Planner

PROJECT MANAGER

Jane A. Morrison

HISTORIAN

Julie M. Koler

RESEARCH ASSISTANT

Dana Koler

CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Eric Eisemann
Mark Hess
Sharr Prohaska

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	ii
PREFACE	iii
HISTORIC OVERVIEW	
Introduction	1
Historic Periods	2
Bibliography	34
IDENTIFICATION	
Methodology	43
Previous Surveys	44
Resource Types	45
EVALUATION	
Methodology	52
Condition of Resources	53
TREATMENT	
Survey and Research Needs	55
Goals and Priorities	56
APPENDICIES	
Appendix A: Prominent Individuals	
Appendix B: Registration	
Appendix C: List of Inventoried Properties	
Appendix D: List of Landscape Features	
Appendix E: Zoning and Comprehensive Plan Designations	

LIST OF FIGURES

Map of Study Area.....	Figure I
Resource Distribution Map: West County.....	Figure II
Resource Distribution Map: East County.....	Figure III
Chart of Resource Types.....	Figure IV
List of Resource Types.....	Figure V

PREFACE

This document represents a major step by Multnomah County toward development of a comprehensive Cultural Resource Protection Plan. The document is modeled after the Resource Protection Planning Process (RP3) developed by the United States Department of the Interior and modified by the Oregon State Office of Historic Preservation (SHPO). The purpose of the report is to provide a framework for consistent decisionmaking in the management of cultural resources.

The project is also a major step by the SHPO toward compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA), which requires the State Historic Preservation Officer to survey and inventory cultural resources throughout the state; and, with state land use law, which requires local jurisdictions to identify and protect significant resources.

The project was conducted from May 1990 through September 1990 by Koler/Morrison Planning Consultants of Oregon City under contract with Multnomah County. The study area encompasses all the unincorporated area in the county, exclusive of federally owned land and urban areas adjacent to the City of Portland.

The project consisted of four major phases: literature search and preparation of an overview of Multnomah County history; update of existing inventory forms; preliminary evaluation of resources; and, preparation of final inventory forms and the final document.

There are four sections in the following report. The *Preface* is followed by section one which provides an overview of Multnomah County history. This chapter focuses on the major events and periods of county history and provides a framework for analysis of resources. The chronological parameters are approximately 1792 to 1940, with some discussion of Native American pre-history. This section also includes a comprehensive bibliography of sources consulted.

The *Identification* section outlines the types of cultural resources in the study area and categorizes them into resource groups. Discussion of each group includes brief historical data summarizing the development of important themes represented by the group, and an outline of the physical characteristics of property types and styles within the group. It includes information on the distribution of resources; number of resources that currently exist and their physical condition; as well as data on past cultural resource surveys in the study area; research and data gaps; and, future survey/inventory priorities.

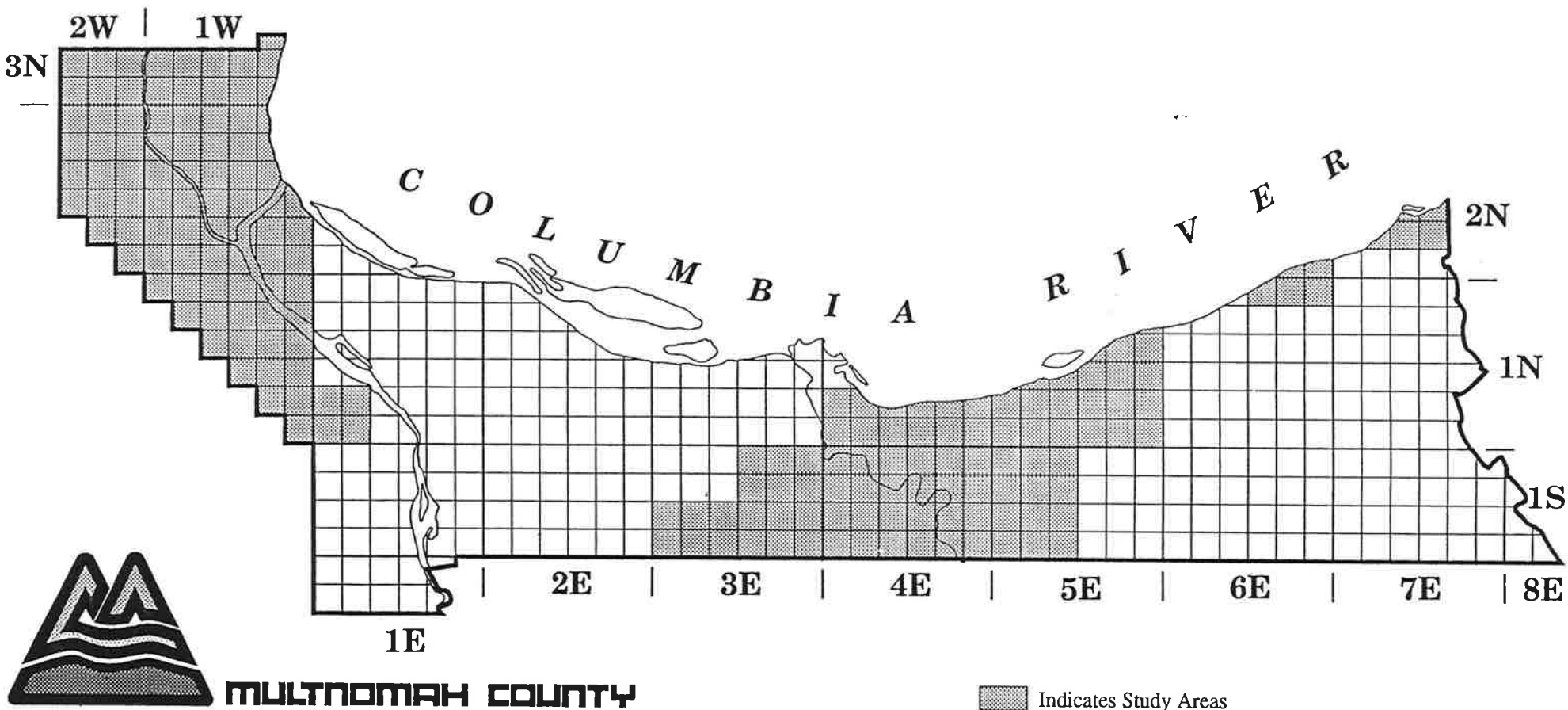
The third section, *Evaluation*, outlines the methodology used for determining significance. It also includes a discussion of the condition and integrity of inventoried resources by resource group.

Section four, *Treatment*, identifies strategies for protecting the County's significant cultural resources.

The *Multnomah County Historic Context* is an evolving document. It will require regular updating and review. Resources that were not identified in this phase of the project may be included at a future date and others should be removed if they no longer meet eligibility requirements. All materials generated in the course of this project are the property of Multnomah County.

FIGURE I

MAP OF STUDY AREA



HISTORIC OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

The *Multnomah County Historic Overview* is a geographically oriented study of significant historical events and themes in Multnomah County history. It is formatted according to the chronological periods outlined in the *Handbook to Historic Preservation Planning in Oregon* prepared by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Within each period the historic themes identified in the SHPO's *Guide to Historic Themes and Chronology* are addressed in summary form.

Temporal Boundaries: 1792-1940

The *Overview* covers the period from 1792 through 1940. The year 1792 marks the initial Euro-American exploration of the Columbia River Valley, in May, by the American Captain Robert Gray, aboard the *Columbia Rediviva*. The Gray exploration was followed in October of 1792 by the first British exploration of the area conducted by Lt. William R. Broughton, commander of the *H.M.S. Chatham*. The year 1940 is the end of the "Motor Age" period. It also corresponds with the 50-year criterion established by the National Park Service for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

Spatial Boundaries

For the purposes of the *Overview* the study area conforms to the current political boundaries of Multnomah County. Established as the sixteenth county in the Oregon Territory, December 22, 1854, Multnomah County was created from parts of Washington County, west of the Willamette River, and Clackamas County, east of the Willamette River. Changes in the original boundaries have been minimal, making its total area at the end of the historic period 434 square miles.

Only a portion of this area was intensively surveyed and inventoried in the course of this project. Please see Figure I Study Area Map.

Topography

Multnomah County is located at the northern end of the Willamette Valley in northwestern Oregon. Although the smallest of Oregon's counties, it encompasses a number of varied and distinct topographic features that have had a significant effect on the area's development.

The eastern boundary of Multnomah County follows the summit of the Cascade mountains to its northern terminus at the Columbia River Gorge. The oldest formation underlying the Cascade Range at this point is a series of late Miocene lava flows overlain by Pliocene (Troutdale formation) and Pleistocene (Boring lava) flows and tuffs (Baldwin 1976:53). These eastern elevations are the highest in the county, ranging between 500 and 3500 feet, with several peaks in excess of 4600 feet. This mountain boundary effectively blocked early overland immigration into the northern valley, forcing the early settlers to hazard the water route and the cascade rapids of the Columbia River Gorge.

The northern boundary of the county follows the main channel of the Columbia River for over 50 miles, from "the foot of the Cascade Falls" (Deady 1876:542) to a point approximately five miles below the confluence of the Willamette and Columbia Rivers. From 1792 until 1834 the

Columbia was the primary artery of exploration and trade used by those coming from both sea (Gray and Broughton) and the interior (Lewis and Clark, Thompson, etc.).

With the beginning of the missionary period in 1834 and continuing until 1846, overland travel was dependent on the Columbia as the point of entry into the Willamette Valley. Rafting down the upper and lower cascade rapids of the Columbia River Gorge was the last, and in many cases most hazardous, leg of the overland "Oregon Trail." In 1846, the Barlow Road circumvented the rugged eastern barrier of Multnomah County, and brought overland immigration into the Willamette Valley around Mount Hood and across Devil's Backbone, approximately three and one-half miles south of the Multnomah County line.

Although the western boundary conforms to specific section lines, it generally follows the summit of the Portland (Tualatin) Hills. This steep, narrow range of hills varies in elevation from 800 to 1300 feet, and separates the Portland Basin from the Tualatin Plains. Composed of Columbia River basalt flows, the range is a series of small volcanics of mid- to late-Miocene origin, and is overlain with Portland Hills silt, a light brown silt from 25 to 100 feet thick, corresponding to the Columbia River floodplain of the middle Pliocene era (Baldwin 1976:44).

The precipitous character of the Portland Hills, in combination with fine, thick silt and the more recent Pleistocene alluviation, made early travel and road building difficult, and helped to define specific historical routes and later architectural characteristics of the structures and buildings constructed in the west hills. One of the primary reasons for the creation of Multnomah County in 1854 was the difficulty in travel from Portland over the west hills to Hillsboro, the Washington County seat. This barrier became the natural western boundary between Multnomah and Washington Counties.

The southern boundary of Multnomah County is also defined by section lines, separating it politically from its eastern parent, Clackamas County. Three distinct topographical divisions within Multnomah County's boundaries have played differing roles in the historical development of the county. From west to east, the divisions are: (1) the Portland Hills; (2) the Portland Basin, the northern terminus of the Willamette Valley; and, (3) the butte and mountain terrain to the south and east composed of the Boring lava flows that rise to meet and cap the older Cascade formations. Within this last division is a distinct subsection formed by glacial outwash and recent alluviation, known as Powell Valley.

The western division, the Portland Hills described above, is the smallest topographic section, totaling approximately 66 square miles. The second general topographic division is the Portland Basin south of the Columbia River. Portland, at an elevation of 77 feet, is underlain by deposits of sand and fine gravel "which may be as thick as 500 feet in places," variously known as "Portland delta gravels," and "Portland gravels" (Baldwin 1976:45). These deposits, overlain along the banks of both the Columbia and Willamette Rivers by more recent alluviation, cover an area of more than 150 square miles in Multnomah County. The Willamette Meridian survey of 1850-1854 described the basin as "land gently rolling, soil 2nd rate, gravelly" (Hunt 1854).

The more recent Pleistocene alluviation in the Portland Basin has formed the Columbia Slough or Bayou, as it was originally termed, a subsection of approximately 40 square miles. Alluviation at the confluence of the Willamette and Columbia Rivers formed Sauvies Island, of which approximately 23 square miles lie within Multnomah County. Both these areas were important in early settlement of the county.

The Portland Basin east of the Willamette River is marked by occasional buttes or cinder cones, including Rocky Butte and Mount Tabor, which are capped by the Boring lava flows.

The county's third general topographic division is composed of rough and irregular terrain of the middle Pliocene Troutdale formations, overlain in many areas by the Boring lava flows of the late Pliocene era. As these rise in elevation from the southwest to the eastern boundary of the county, they begin to overlay the much earlier Miocene formations of the Cascade Range.

This division may be described as beginning at the northern face of Mount Scott on the southern county line, and continuing in a northeasterly direction toward Troutdale; taking in the eastern half of the county, or approximately 200 square miles. The rising elevations, from 500 to 900 feet, are broken in several places by glacial outwashes that have created more level valley forms, one of the most significant of which is Powell Valley, running in a southeasterly direction from Gresham to the county line. East of the Sandy River, the Troutdale formation and Boring lavas cap the older Columbia River Group in the Cascade Range, forming the highest peaks in the county.

Vegetation

Of the three major Oregon provinces--Forest, Shrub-Steppe, and Alpine--only the Forest province is represented in Multnomah County while only three of thirteen vegetation zones defined within the larger Forest province are represented in the county. The "Western Hemlock Zone," covering most of the mountainous eastern division of the county and the higher elevations of the Portland Hills, is the largest of these zones.

Although named for the shade-tolerant western hemlock which would dominate in the complete absence of fire and logging, the Douglas-fir predominates under present conditions (Loy 1976:58).

Early settlers tended to avoid this area of the county, but as the need for timber increased with the population growth of the late 19th century, this area became far more significant.

The "Pacific Silver Fir Zone," a subalpine forest zone, is found in the extreme southeast corner of the county. Of the three primary zones this has had the least direct effect on the settlement and economic growth of the county. The smallest zone, it is also the best preserved, lying within the Bull Run Water Reserve.

The third zone, the "Willamette Forest-Prairie Zones," covers the Portland Basin and the lower elevations of the Portland Hills and eastern hills.

Forest, woodland, prairie, and riparian deciduous forest occupy the alluvial bottomlands of the Willamette Valley and the lowest surrounding foot-hills. The most persistent zone includes the Douglas-fir with admixtures of grand fir and big-leaf maple. On drier sites and often representing successional vegetation is a woodland of Oregon white oak. This species also occupies isolated positions in prairies which are maintained by burning...A deciduous forest of Oregon ash, black cottonwood and willow flanks the river (Loy 1976:58).

This zone in Multnomah County varied from the same zone in the upper valley--above Willamette Falls--in one way that significantly affected the early growth and development of the county. The Kalapuya Indians of the upper valley burnt off large tracts of land to help capture game and to encourage the growth of various seeds. These fires retarded the establishment of conifers and deciduous trees on the open prairie lands--with the notable exception of the Oregon white oak. (Carbon tests on stumps in the upper valley have indicated dates as early as the 1690s for the earliest field burnings.) Due to the Native American practice, the first settlers found areas of open prairies in the upper valley that did not require extensive clearing

before a first crop could be planted; and as many of the pioneers arrived exhausted and destitute, the importance of an early "cash" crop was paramount.

The Native Americans inhabiting the lower valley did not practice field burning; therefore, the Portland Basin presented a very different landscape to the overland pioneers on their arrival. The lands of Multnomah County were still covered with ancient coniferous and riparian deciduous forests, and what appeared to be an impenetrable understory. Prior to 1850, this led the vast majority of early immigrants to locate on the prairies in the upper valley.

Confronted with the Portland Basin's ancient forest lands, early agrarian settlement in Multnomah County located first on Sauvies Island and along the south shore of the Columbia River, north of the "Bayou" (Columbia Slough). Early farming claims also included those areas along the Willamette and Sandy River waterways where more recent alluviation and the annual inundation hindered growth of the dense forests of the Willamette Forest Zone. In many instances these were the same areas which were inhabited by Native Americans before they succumbed to diseases introduced by Euro-Americans in the early 19th century.

HISTORIC PERIODS

(1792)-1811: Exploration

On May 11, 1792, Captain Robert Gray, commanding the *Columbia Rediviva* out of Boston, became the first Euro-American to cross the Columbia River bar, and to initiate the exploration of the "Great River of the West"--naming it after his ship. Captain Gray thus established the first link in the claim of the United States to the Oregon Territory. As early as 1775 the Spanish Captain Bruno Heceta had voyaged to the mouth of the Columbia but was unable to enter the river; Spanish maps for the following 60 years referred to the river as San Roque, the name Heceta applied to the northern promontory, Cape San Roque, on the Washington side (Barry 1932:444). Later explorers mention genetic traits such as red hair and blue eyes in certain coastal and Columbia River Native Americans. These reports, together with certain legends and Native folklore, suggest the possibility of castaway Spanish sailors living at or near the mouth of the Columbia prior to 1792, but no documentation substantiates actual Euro-American contact with the Columbia River region prior to Gray's voyage.

The discovery of the Columbia River and the exploration of the Oregon Territory are tied to the burgeoning North American fur trade. Although Russian fur interests had begun exploiting the Pacific as early as 1711, it was British Captain James Cook's voyage of 1776-1780 that led to the expansion of Euro-American trade interests in the North Pacific beginning in the 1780s, and the subsequent exploration of the northwest coast.

Captain Robert Gray had first sailed the northwest coast between 1787 and 1790 to "obtain a cargo of furs on the American coast and to proceed with the same to China to be exchanged for a cargo of tea and to return with the tea to Boston" (Bancroft 1886:445). It was on his second voyage, after the reorganization of his Boston Fur Company in 1790, that the discovery of the Columbia was made.

After crossing the Columbia's bar on May 11, 1792, Gray stayed on the river until May 20, exploring approximately 25 miles above the mouth and trading with the lower Chinookan tribes. John Boit, a member of the *Columbia* crew, wrote in his Journal:

The river extended to the NE. as far as eye cou'd reach, and water fit to drink as far down as the Bars, at the entrance. We directed our course up this noble River in search of a village. The beach was lin'd with natives, who ran along the shore following the

ship. Soon after, above 20 canoes came off and brought a good lot of furs and salmon, which last they sold two for a board Nail. The furs we likewise bought cheap, for Copper and Cloth. They appear'd to view the Ship with the greatest astonishment and no doubt we was the first civilized people that they ever saw (Carey 1922:141).

Gray's trading exploration stopped far short of the Multnomah County region, but on his return to Nootka Sound he gave a map of his discoveries to the commandant of the Spanish fort. A copy of this map was obtained in September by Captain George Vancouver, commander of a British survey squadron sent to chart the northwest coast. Composed of Vancouver's commandship, *H.M.S. Discovery*, the *H.M.S. Daedalus* in command of Lieutenant Whidbey, and the *H.M.S. Chatham* in command of Lieutenant William Robert Broughton, Vancouver's squadron had sailed past the mouth of the Columbia River as early as April 27, 1792--two weeks before Gray's discovery--but had failed to distinguish the entrance from the general shoreline. With Gray's map, Vancouver and Broughton returned south, down the Washington coastline from Nootka, arriving off the mouth of the Columbia on October 19, 1792 (Carey 1922:142).

Lieutenant Broughton was able to bring the smaller 135-ton brig *Chatham* over the bar on October 20, but Vancouver was unwilling to risk the larger 340-ton war sloop *Discovery*, and on October 21 "weighed and stood to sea" (Vancouver 1817:73), leaving the first actual survey of the lower Columbia River, and the first European contact with the Multnomah County region to his lieutenant, William Robert Broughton.

Broughton sailed the *Chatham* as far as the present Point Ellice on the Washington side of the Columbia, then continued his surveying expedition "in the ship's boats with a crew of oarsmen" (Barry 1932:446). He reached the confluence of the Willamette Slough (Multnomah Channel) and the Columbia River, in present-day Columbia County, October 28, 1792, naming the channel "Call's River."

On October 29, 1792, Broughton became the first European to enter present-day Multnomah County, and bestowed the first two English geographic place names in the region, naming the Willamette River, "River Mannings," and the point on which he stood to view River Mannings, "Belle Vue Point." Located on Sauvies Island, this point still carries that name. Broughton also named Mount Hood, "a very distant high snowy mountain...rising beautifully conspicuous in the midst of an extensive tract of low or moderately elevated land" (McArthur 1981:510). Vancouver states in "Voyage of Discovery" that Broughton was standing on Belle Vue Point when he first saw Mount Hood in the distance. Broughton named Hayden Island "Goose Island," which he later changed to "Menziess Island" in honor of Archibald Menziess, the famous British botanist who accompanied the expedition. Broughton also named what is now the Sandy River "River Baring."

The expedition continued up the Columbia, charting the river for approximately 120 miles from its mouth. On October 30, 1792, at "Point Possession," somewhere in the vicinity of present-day Corbett, Broughton raised the British flag "claiming the country in the name of King George III--five months after the river's American discovery and prior claim by Robert Gray" (Corning 1956:36). On the same date Lieutenant Broughton, continuing east, named Point Vancouver on the north bank of the Columbia, before terminating his exploration at the beginning of the Columbia River Gorge.

The section of the Columbia River between Corbett Station, in Multnomah County, and Point Vancouver, in Clark County, Washington, has been named "Broughton Reach," commemorating this first European explorer. "Broughton Bluff," a prominent landmark east of Troutdale and immediately north of Lewis and Clark State Park, is also named for the explorer.

On November 2, 1805, 13 years after Broughton's chartings, Captains Meriwether Lewis and William Clark entered the region. They had traveled overland 537 days from their beginning "not far from St. Louis," Missouri (Carey 1922:187). Navigating the Cascades of the Columbia, which they named the "Great Shoot," they entered the lower river valley and encamped that night on the north side of the river opposite Corbett. The following day, November 3, 1805, they named the Sandy River, "Quicksand River," exploring it to a point above Broughton Bluff, in the immediate vicinity of present-day Lewis and Clark State Park. For the remainder of their westward journey through the Portland Basin, the expedition kept to mid-channel or to the north bank of the Columbia. They named Government Island, "Diamond Island," and Hayden Island, "Image Canoe Island," but failed to notice the mouth of the Willamette River from their passage on the opposite bank. On November 4, 1805, they encamped opposite the northern end of Sauvies Island, and on November 5 the company traveled out of the Portland Basin. The journal entry for November 5th, 1805, describes the northwestern boundary of the basin, as the Scappoose Mountains (Portland Hills) bisect the Columbia, coupled with a description of the Portland Basin:

The river is here deep, and about a mile and a half in width. Here, too, the ridge of low mountains, running northwest and southeast, crosses the river, and forms the western boundary of the plain through which we had just passed. This great plain or valley begins above the mouth of Quicksand River, and is about sixty miles long in a straight line, while on the right and left it extends to a great distance; it is fertile and delightful country, shaded by thick groves of tall timber, and watered by small ponds on both sides of the river. The soil is rich, and capable of any species of culture; but in the present condition of the Indians, its chief production is the wappatoo root, which grows spontaneously and exclusively in this region. Sheltered as it is on both sides, the temperature is much milder than that of the surrounding country; for even at this season of the year we observed but very little appearance of frost. It is inhabited by numerous tribes of Indians, who either reside in it permanently, or visit its waters in quest of fish and wappatoo roots. We gave it the name of Columbia Valley (Thwaites 1842:88-89).

The most significant discovery made by the Lewis and Clark expedition on its return journey eastward the following spring was the discovery of the mouth of the Willamette River, and the information obtained from local natives concerning the valley above the Falls. On March 30, 1806, Lewis and Clark once again passed by the confluence of the Willamette and Columbia Rivers without noticing it. Encamped opposite the mouth of the Sandy on the morning of the April 2, 1806, Lewis and Clark reported the following visit:

About eight o'clock several canoes arrived with visitors, and among the rest were two young men who were pointed out as Cushooks. They said that their nation resided at the falls of a large river which emptied itself into the south side of the Columbia a few miles above us; and they drew a map of the country with a coal, on a mat. In order to satisfy himself as to the truth of this information, Captain Clarke persuaded one of the young Cushooks, by a present of a burning-glass, to accompany him to the river, in search of which he immediately set out with a canoe and seven of our men (Thwaites 1842:164).

The afternoon of April 2, 1806, Captain Clark entered the river "which the Indians call Multnomah [Willamette], from a nation of the same name residing near it on Wappatoo [Sauvies] Island." He encamped that night near a Native American lodge "thirty feet long and forty deep, built of broad boards, and covered with the bark of white cedar," on the east bank

of the Willamette approximately three miles above the Multnomah Channel (Thwaites 1842:168).

The following morning, April 3, 1806, Clark reached a point believed to be in the general vicinity of Portland University, before returning to the main camp.

Clark returned with verification of the the Multnomah [Willamette] River, and information on the Falls and the upper valley, including maps of Wappatoo Island and the Multnomah copied from drawings by Natives. The journal entries for these dates were to supply invaluable geographic and ethnologic data, along with information that was not entirely accurate; however, it would help propogate the myth of the Willamette Valley as a "land of milk and honey" and unlimited resources--a myth that continued to persist well into the second half of the century, long after reality could accommodate the myth. Clark himself believed that the Multnomah (Willamette) River could serve shipping as far as his explorations had taken him, which was remarkably accurate regarding what was to become the site of Portland. Along with this observation, Clark also surmised:

Its regular, gentle current, the depth, smoothness, and uniformity with which it rolls its vast body of water, proves that its supplies are at once distant and steady; nor judging from its appearance and course, is it rash to believe that the Multnomah and its tributary streams water, the vast extent of country between the western mountains and those of the seacoast, as far, perhaps, as the Gulf of California (Thwaites 1842:168).

With the publication of the Lewis and Clark journals in 1842, at a time when interest in the Oregon Country was eagerly sought but extremely scarce, Lewis and Clark's observations served the purpose of educating those who had access to the information, and adding fuel to the myth of a country of unlimited agricultural potential and resources.

During Clark's brief exploration of the Willamette he also gained information relating to the three nations of the upper Chinookan tribes that had occupied Multnomah County since precontact days. This is the only first-hand information on certain specific cultural characteristics of the Multnomah County Native Americans and it has proved invaluable to historians, anthropologists and ethnologists studying the area.

The three divisions of the Chinookan linguistic families occupying Multnomah County were the Multnomahs, Clackamas and Cascades.

The Multnomah nation, composed of as many as ten bands, one of which was the Multnomahs proper, resided in the northwest section of Multnomah County including Sauvies Island, and along both banks of the Willamette River from its mouth to the Guild Lake site, and along the south bank of the Columbia from the mouth of the Willamette to the southern tip of Hayden Island.

The Clackamas nation originally ranged from along the Clackamas River into the southern area of Multnomah County, and along the Willamette from the mouth of the Clackamas River to East Portland. Their original range was augmented for a short time to include the southern bank of the Columbia River, after the "cold sick" epidemics of 1829-31 decimated the native inhabitants composing the third largest nation of Chinookan stock, the Cascades.

The Cascades resided on the southern bank of the Columbia from the "Great Shoot," to Hayden Island and on several of the Columbia River islands within the county boundaries. Lewis and Clark referred to this group as the Shalala nation, and gained a considerable amount of information from members of the various Shalala bands.