

A Brief History of Snohomish County, Washington

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Physical Features

Snohomish County is one of the fastest growing communities in the United States. Covering 2,098 square miles, the county ranges from the crest of the Cascade Mountains (including 10,436-foot Glacier Peak) to Puget Sound. Though it encompasses an area greater than either the states of Rhode Island or Delaware, most of the county's development and residents can be found along the narrow, westernmost Puget Sound lowlands.

Two major river systems rise in the mountains and run west through rich agricultural valleys to the sound. In the north and center, the Stillaguamish River, with its North and South Fork tributaries, dominates the landscape. To the south, the Snohomish River is formed from the Skykomish and Snoqualmie rivers, with the Pilchuck and Sultan Rivers as additional significant tributaries.

Native Americans

The major rivers were named for the Native American people who lived along their banks and used them for transportation. The native people had a highly developed culture based on fishing for salmon, and hunting and gathering in the densely forested land.

Early Explorers

Europeans first sighted these shores in June, 1792, when Captain George Vancouver landed near the present site of Everett to claim the Pacific Northwest for Great Britain. Vancouver was also responsible for naming much of western Washington, including Puget Sound, Port Gardner Bay at Everett, and Port Susan Bay at Stanwood. Lt. Charles Wilkes of the U.S. Navy later explored and mapped this area in 1841.

Snohomish County was carved out of Island County on January 20, 1861 and grew slowly during the territorial years of 1853 to 1889. During this period settlements were founded at Mukilteo, the Tulalip Indian Reservation, Snohomish, Lowell (now part of Everett), Tualco (near Monroe), Stanwood and Edmonds.

Early Growth

The Great Northern Railway brought a major boom down the Skykomish Valley to the new industrial city of Everett in the early 1890s. The towns of Index, Gold Bar, Startup, and Sultan grew largely because they were situated along this railway. A nationwide depression in 1893 put an end to this period of prosperity but was followed by recovery to steadier growth based on timber and farming. After World War II, growth quickened in the southwestern part of the county, as Seattle influenced creation of the suburban cities of Lynnwood, Brier, Mountlake

Terrace, Woodway, and Mill Creek. Both Woodway and Mill Creek were incorporated after beginning as planned residential developments.

Industrial Growth

In the late 1960's construction of the [Boeing](#) Company's 747 plant at Snohomish County's [Paine Field](#) near Everett and the later development of high technology industries along north Interstate 405 corridor and north toward Lake Stevens and

Marysville brought population increases in those areas.

During the last 30 years of the 20th Century, the older economic mainstays of farming, logging, lumber, and paper production began long declines which affected the economies and lifestyles of many of the county's natural-resource-based communities. The people of Snohomish County faced significant changes and challenges as they adapted to a long period of population and economic growth.

Population, Economic Expansion Continue

During the 1990s, Snohomish County population grew by 30%. The county is consistently rated one of the fastest growing major counties in the United States. The sustained growth in the 1990s of regional technology industries, the construction of United States Naval Station Everett, and the major expansion of the Boeing plant to accommodate the 747, 767 and 777 lines all contributed to continued prosperity. By 2001 its population was 618,600. With construction underway on the 787 and an economy attuned to foreign trade, the county appears able to withstand economic downturns better than most other regions of the country.