Historical map of Columbia River, Pacific Ocean

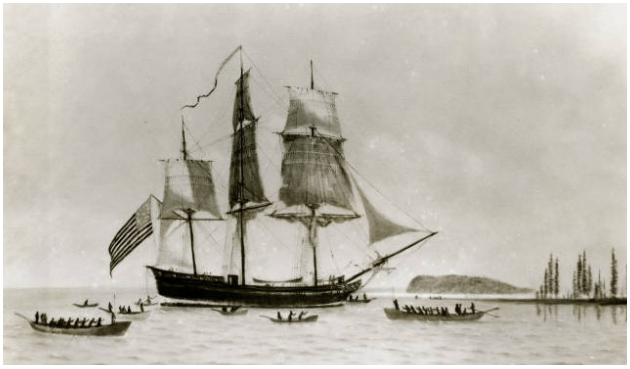
3

Themes

The purpose of this chapter is to document the themes or broad ideas that make the Columbia-Pacific region a distinctive place in the heritage, culture, and history of the nation. In this chapter, a brief overview of the region is followed by more detailed treatments of eight individual themes.

RESILIENCE: OVERVIEW OF THE COLUMBIA-PACIFIC REGION

The location of the proposed Columbia-Pacific National Heritage Area is one of the most distinctive geographical points on the North American continent. The Columbia-Pacific region is broadly defined as the place where the Columbia River, the largest river flowing from the North American continent to the Pacific Ocean, meets the sea. At the river's mouth, the waterways of the Columbia basin—a network that reaches into seven U.S. states and one Canadian province—meets the Pacific Ocean connecting the West Coast of North America and the Pacific Rim. This strategic location has determined the region's prominence in both prehistory and modern times.



Captain Robert Gray's Discovery of the Columbia, 1792

National Significance

The region's first period of national significance occurred before the arrival of Americans and Europeans to the Northwest coast. Prior to contact, the trading network along the Columbia-Snake River system was one of the two largest tribal trading networks in North America. (The other was the Mississippi-Missouri network.) The river's mouth was a critical place of power and influence within this network. The Chinookan people who controlled the lower Columbia controlled the nexus between river trade and ocean trade. They traded with inland tribes from the Columbia Plateau at the Dalles and with coastal tribes as far away as Alaska and northern California.

Bronze relief commemorating the Lewis and Clark Expedition, by artist Gareth Curtis

The Chinookan people used their position to build a wealthy, populous, and complex society. When the Lewis and Clark Expedition traveled through the region in 1805 and 1806, they recorded the largest population of native peoples and cultures anywhere along their transcontinental journey; and they were seeing this after the first wave of European diseases

had already hit. Archaeologists estimate the pre-contact population along the lower river at 40,000 people, a level it would not reach again until decades into United States settlement of the region.

The region's second period of national significance was in the late 18th and early 19th centuries when it was the location of an international race to map and control the West Coast of North America. Though this contest was primarily between the United States and Britain, Spain and Russia also played a part. This contest was rarely conducted through force of arms. Instead, each nation sent expeditions to explore and map homelands of Northwest tribes and attempted to engage in trade with them.

Global Trading Network

For a brief time, the region was the center of a global trading network called "The Golden Round." European and American ships traded metal and manufactured goods with the Chinookan people for furs, largely those of the sea otter. The otter furs were traded in China for tea and porcelain. By the time Lewis and Clark arrived, this network was already thriving and Expedition members saw sailors' jackets and brass a at the Snake River-Columbia confluence, 350 miles inland from the sea.

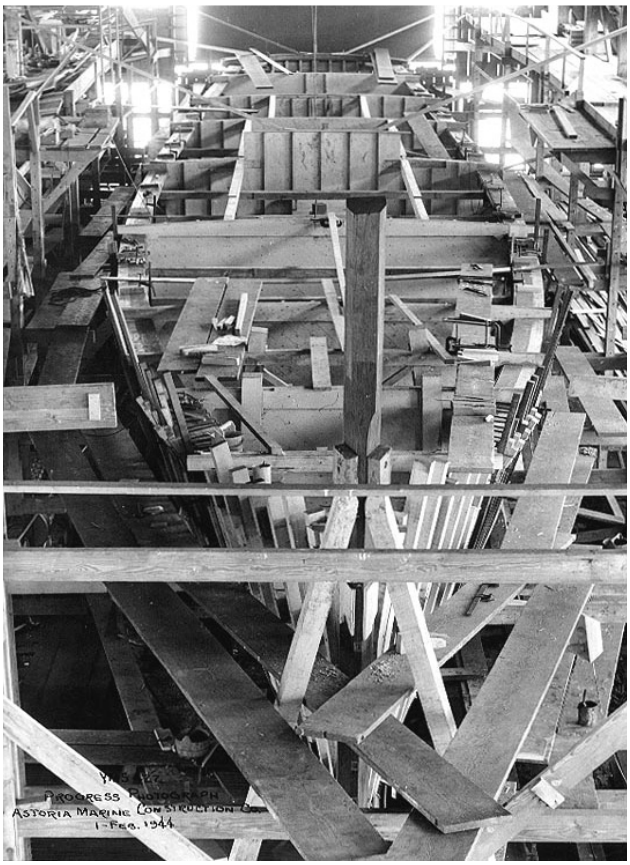
Mother sea otter with pup (Michael L. Baird, 2005)

By 1846, the quest for empire had played out. The United States controlled the river mouth and the international boundary was set at the 49th parallel. Oddly enough, at this time the country was strangely empty. The U.S. had gained control over a vast territory that was once heavily populated, but by the mid-1800s many tribal populations, including Chinookan peoples at the mouth of the Columbia River, had been

Chinook woman with cedar woven gathering basket, 1910

decimated by diseases. After a heart-wrenching series of epidemics passed through the area, only a few hundred survived in a region that was once rich with villages. These survivors, having lost most of their tribal kin, bravely clung to their culture. It is their resilience and refusal to give up that made certain that Chinookan culture would survive into the 21st century.

Starting in the 1850s, after the present-day Northwest was added to the United States, the Columbia-Pacific region would serve a nationally strategic role as the gateway to the Columbia River basin. The nation looked ahead to establishing a new era of trade commerce. Two sets of enterprises sprung up. The first was aimed at getting ships safely across the Columbia River bar, the most dangerous river entrance in North America and one of the three most harrowing river



Shipbuilding at the Astoria Marine Construction Co., 1944

mouths in the world. The second was aimed at keeping enemies out and resulted in a system of coastal defenses, including the only U.S. location to come under enemy fire since the War of 1812.

Economic Activities

Also beginning in the 1850s, the Columbia-Pacific region became the birthplace of many of the large scale economic activities that would define the economy and culture of the northwest coast of the United States during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries:

- Commercial fishing and processing
- Logging
- Recreation and tourism
- Dairy farming

It is an economy and living that has been the subject of critically celebrated works, such as Ken Kesey's *Sometimes a Great Notion* (logging), Ursula LeGuin's *Searoad: Chronicles of Klatsand* (tourism), as well as popular national reality television programs such as the *Deadliest Catch* (fishing) and *The Axe Men* (logging). Not only would this be the first NHA to interpret the coastal Northwest, it might be the best place to understand it.

Economic booms in commercial fishing and logging brought a distinctive mix of ethnic groups to the Northwest. During different periods of the region's history, these ethnic groups would form a substantial minority of the region's residents and create social and cultural institutions unique to the Northwest.

The Columbia-Pacific region was also the location of Oregon's landmark efforts to protect public access to the coast. Oregon's actions would become a model for the nation.

Processing Willapa Bay oysters

Svenson Store

Economic Diversity and Resilience

What is perhaps most distinctive about the region is not the "firsts" but its economic diversity and resilience. The Columbia-Pacific region is a place where one can trace heritage activities and livelihoods over past centuries and generations, up to the present day. These are not part of the past but have evolved to become part of the region's 21st century culture and economy. This is in contrast to many other places in the Northwest where traditional livelihoods have perished and, along with them, the historic and cultural fabric of place.

One reason for this region's resilience is that the Columbia-Pacific has always been sustained by multiple endeavors. This includes not only those activities mentioned above but also cranberry and dairy farming, piloting, marine industry, and military posts, among others. A second reason is the Columbia itself and the region's proximity to the Willamette Valley and Puget Sound. While rural and very separate, it is close enough to arteries of transportation and centers of population to sustain itself.

Unlike other coastal areas where towns have either declined when their primary industry shrank or lost much of their heritage during conversion to an economy driven solely by tourism, the Columbia-Pacific region has endured and, with it, many of its working waterfronts, historic buildings and districts, families, and ethnic diversity.

THEMES

1. Waterways: The Great River of the West meets the Pacific Rim

The Columbia-Pacific is one of the nation's distinctive geographic regions. As noted, the Columbia's drainage basin is enormous. It covers 39,700 square miles and includes not only Oregon, Washington, and Idaho but parts of western Montana, British Columbia, and small portions of Wyoming and Nevada. It is here at the mouth of the

Astoria "Interstate" Bridge construction

Columbia, that this vast network of waterways finally meets the sea. The mouth of the river is a place of concentration, a gathering place for migrating people and animals. Every trade vessel, trade item, idea, industry or anadromous fish that moves between the freshwater Columbia and the saltwater Pacific passes through this place.

The Columbia-Pacific region is a point of transition. Freshwater and tidewater meet in the wide Columbia River estuaries. Saltwater intrudes to approximately the eastern end of the proposed NHA. As described in the following section, this transition between saltwater and freshwater has invested the area with tremendous natural bounty.

The Columbia-Pacific also includes most of the extensive tidelands of the lower Columbia. Although small tidal movements are measurable as far as Portland and beyond, it is only within the project area that these reversals are significant and have shaped technology and life-ways related to fishing, logging, and other activities.

Connected by Water

From prehistoric times until the coming of the railroads in the late 19th century, the region was connected by water and, therefore, by water travel. The region's historic towns sprung up along the estuary or next to one of its tributary bays, sloughs, and rivers, such as Youngs Bay, Baker Bay, the Skipanon River, Grays River, and Deep River. Many residents felt more closely connected to other estuary towns than to the developing urban centers of the Willamette Valley. At times, the region has had more frequent contact and trade with San Francisco or ships traveling around Cape Horn than with the nearby Willamette Valley. Most of the communities maintain their working waterfronts to this day. Until 1966, there was no bridge at Astoria and travel across the river at its mouth was by ferry from Astoria to Megler. Pilings from the ferry docks can be seen at the national park unit at Dismal Nitch. Upriver, a ferry still runs between Puget Island, Washington,

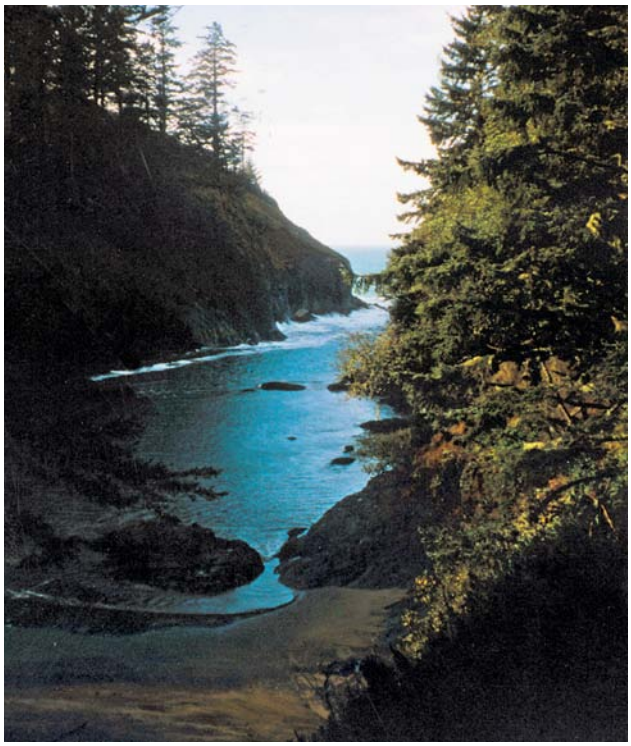
and Westport, Oregon.

Geologic History

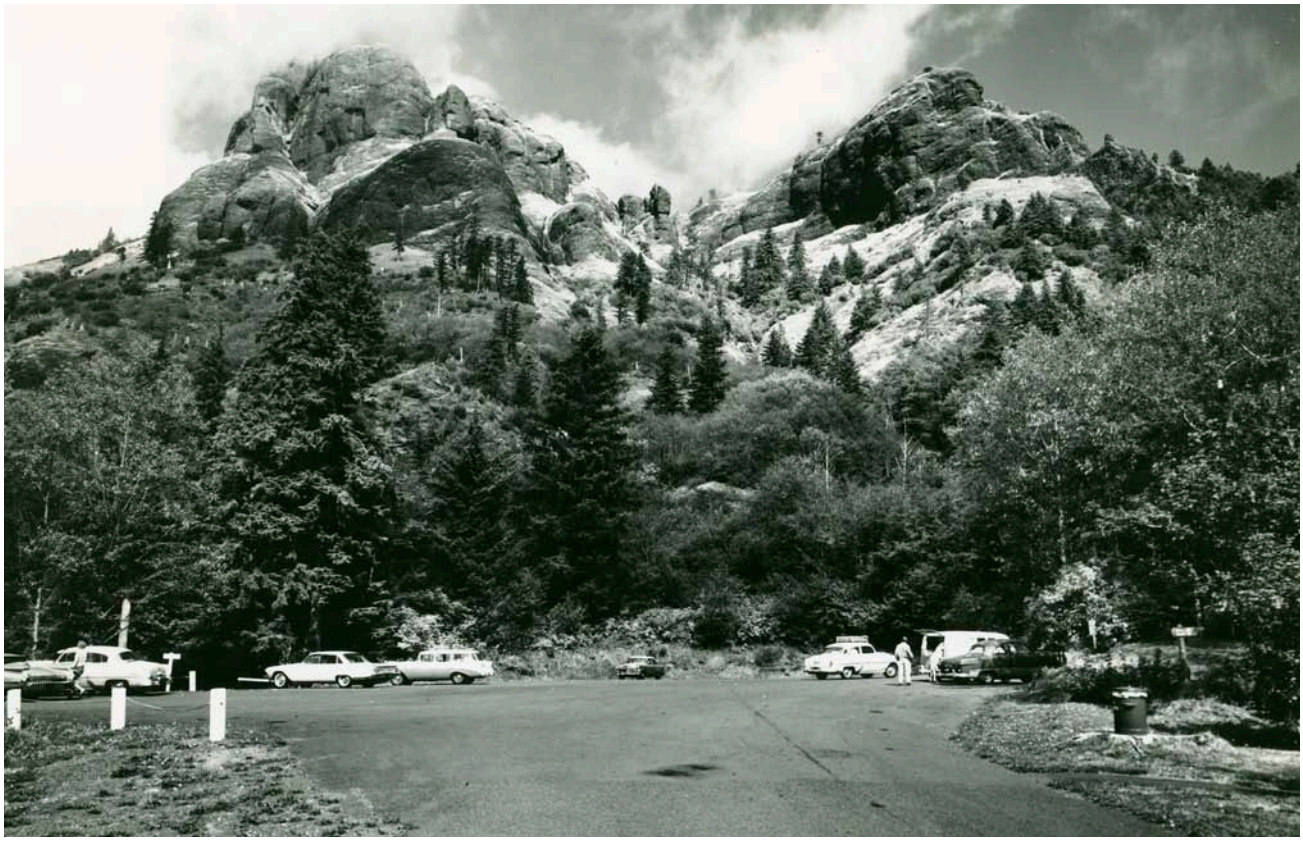
The Columbia-Pacific region has been shaped both by the great river and by the tectonically active Pacific Rim. The effect of plate collision on the Columbia-Pacific region is distinctive. Tectonic and volcanic activity shaped the course of the lower Columbia River and formed the region's most distinctive mountains, headlands and ancient cultural divides. In historic and prehistoric times, tectonic activity has also caused subduction earthquakes and tsunamis that have changed the course of small rivers and the shape of forests in the region.

Basalt Flows

The ancient Columbia River emptied into the Pacific Ocean at the latitude of present-day Newport, Oregon. Millions of years ago, areas of volcanism near the Washington-Idaho border began erupting in a series of more than 300 lava flows, collectively called



Inlet surrounded by basalt headlands at Cape Disappointment



Saddle Mountain, OR

the Columbia River basalt flows. Lava from some of these flows traveled down and filled the Columbia River's channel. These flows did not stop when they reached the sea, which at that time was far inland. Instead, they continued to travel down the river's submarine canyon, sometimes filling it to a depth of 3,000 feet. Each time its channel was filled, the river moved north and found another course until it reached its present location.

The ancient lava flows were pushed skyward by plate collision. They are preserved in some of the region's most scenic features including the rugged headlands at Cape Disappointment and Tillamook Head. On the Oregon side of the river, the lava flows formed a series of peaks including Saddle Mountain, Angora Peak, Onion Peak, and Nicolai Mountain. Collectively, these peaks form the divide between the Columbia and Nehalem watersheds and the boundary of the proposed NHA. Historically, these peaks also formed a geographic divide between the Chinookan people to the north, the Salish speaking Tillamook to the south and the Athabascan-speaking Clatskanie to the east.

High Peaks

Saddle Mountain, located within Saddle Mountain State Park, is the highest of the peaks. It towers over the Youngs Bay watershed and its distinctive form is a landmark for people on both sides of the river. Chinookan people revere the mountain as their place of creation.

On the Washington side, the Willapa Hills historically served as a boundary between the Chinookan people to the south, the Salish-speaking Chehalis to the northwest, and the Salish-speaking Quinault to the north.

Coastal Features

The coastal features created by the Columbia are as significant in size as the river itself. At the end of the last ice age, sea levels were far lower than they are

Aerial photo of Long Beach, WA

Dune grasses at Waikiki Beach, WA

today, and the Washington and Oregon coasts were far seaward. Sea levels rose as glaciers melted, pushing the sea several miles inland from its current location. About 5,500 years ago, sea level rise began to slow because sediments carried by the Columbia built land faster than the sea's rise could flood it.

Over many centuries, these sediments piled up and were pushed by sea currents north and south of the river's mouth to form the Clatsop Plains and the Long Beach Peninsula. Seen from the air, the dune systems of the Long Beach Peninsula and the Clatsop Plains form a broken series of ridges. Between the ridges, the water table has risen to form ponds, lakes, and wetlands. The oldest dunes farthest inland are more than 5,000 years old while the youngest dunes are less than 100 years old.

Collectively, the 55-mile system of dune ridges that stretches from Leadbetter Point in Washington to Tillamook Head in Oregon is the longest on the West Coast. These sands harbor more than 90 percent of the entire population of Pacific razor clams.

Additionally, the native coastal prairie is one of the rarest habitats along the West Coast, and, though much of this habitat has been changed, this region has more land that could be restored to native prairie than anywhere else on the West Coast. Several landowners within the Columbia-Pacific region are restoring these prairies, and with them, endangered species such as the western snowy plover, the Oregon silverspot butterfly, and other species are returning.

Rising sea levels at the end of the last ice age also formed Willapa Bay, the second largest bay, behind only San Francisco Bay, and the largest producer of oysters on the West Coast. The bay is a "ria," an estuary formed when a rising sea floods the mouths of several small rivers. Sediments carried by the Columbia to form the Long Beach Peninsula narrowed the connection between Willapa Bay and the Pacific Ocean to a relatively narrow passage between Leadbetter Point and Cape Shoalwater.

2. Estuaries

Estuaries everywhere are biologically productive. The Columbia River estuary and Willapa Bay are among the most productive ecosystems in the nation.

Fish Habitat

The Columbia River estuary is a portal for all anadromous fish passing between the river's huge drainage basin and the Pacific Ocean. Although salmon and other anadramous fish range all along the West Coast, no other area has played as great a role in the lives of so many fish as the Columbia River estuary.

Historically, the Columbia River basin was home to the largest salmon runs in the United States. Archaeologists and historians estimated that the tribes in the basin harvested as many as 20 million

Chinook salmon

Youngs River Falls

pounds of salmon annually before the arrival of Euro-Americans. Every one of these fish passed through the estuary at the beginning and end of their ocean lives.

The fish headed upstream to spawn were at their fattest when they crossed the Columbia River bar. As James Swan notes in his 1857 work *The Northwest Coast*, the Chinook salmon of the Columbia were *"…without doubt, the finest salmon in the world, and, being taken so near the ocean, has its fine flavor in perfection…are much larger and fatter. I have seen those that weighed eighty pounds; and one gentleman informed me that twelve salmon he had in his smoke-house averaged sixty-five pounds each, the largest weighing seventy-eight pounds."*

The people at the river mouth had a monopoly on the fattest fish. Both the Chinookan people and the salmon packers and canners that followed took advantage of this monopoly and created great wealth. The tribes developed a complex and sophisticated culture with a powerful trading network. It was so powerful and wide-ranging that a dialect of Chinook became the basis for Chinook Jargon, a trade pidgin used along the West Coast from northern California to Alaska. The canners also created communities that were, for a time, among the wealthiest per capita in the United States. This was due in part to the plentiful fish.

While the mature fishes' upstream journey shaped the human economy and culture of the region, it is during the young fish's downstream journey that the estuary is most important for the fish. Time in the estuary is critical. It is in the estuary that the fish make the transition from freshwater to saltwater creatures. They do this by degrees, exposing themselves to saltier and saltier water. In some species, this transition can take weeks. While in the estuary, the salmon feed on the rich variety of insects and larvae that inhabit the river estuaries as they make their way to the sea.

Oyster Harvesting at Willapa Bay, 1940

To this day, the Columbia River estuary is a key issue in legal battles to ensure the survival of Columbia River salmon. Several of the most important restoration sites are within the proposed NHA boundary.

Oysters

Nearby Willapa Bay is considered to be the largest farmed oyster bed in the world. In the 1850s, a few entrepreneurs began shipping oysters to San Francisco to meet demands from the growing Gold Rush population. Oysters were the rage. The evidence of these oyster boom years is preserved in the town of Oysterville, formed in 1854 and now part of the Oysterville National Historic District. The present day oyster industry continues along the shores of Willapa Bay. Estimates suggest that one in every six oysters harvested in the United States is from the Willapa. In addition to oysters, the bay is rich in crabs, clams, flatfish, and seabirds.

Resilience and Fragility of Resource Economies and the Resources that Sustain Them

Though bountiful, the region's history indicates that this bounty and the economies and communities that depend on it are both resilient and fragile. Resource-dependent communities are, by their nature, vulnerable to changes in taste, technology, and competition from other resource-dependent communities. They are dependent on distant markets for their products, whether for wood products, canned salmon, or leisure time. These communities boom when conditions are right and bust when consumer tastes shift. Economic booms can sometimes deplete the resources on which they depend. The salmon that fed the Chinookan people and fueled the cannery boom were overfished in the late 19th century. As the choice large Chinook salmon or "June hogs" became rarer, canneries switched to other species of fish. At other times, resources are impacted by forces outside the area's boundary. While the canneries and packing plants declined in number and became more efficient, upstream dams built in the twentieth century decimated fish populations before they reached the estuary.

3. Land of Water and Cedar: Chinookan Homeland

The Columbia-Pacific region is home to Chinookan people. The Chinookan were primarily traders, perhaps the most astute and adaptable traders on the West Coast before the conquest of North America. Their strategic location at the mouth of the Columbia was the foundation of their wealth and created their distinctive cultural traditions.

Chinook plank house

Homeland of the Chinook

The story of the Chinookan people is indispensable to the history of our nation and dispels several myths about Indian people. The Chinook were traders that traveled far and wide along the coast and rivers of the Northwest. They had a complex society of royalty, commoners, and slaves. While they practiced slavery, they also practiced remarkable gender equality.

Finally, rather than being victims of European and American trade and expansion, the Chinook initially adapted well and used their new foreign trading partners to expand their power and influence. It was only the heartbreaking toll that disease took on their people and families that finally removed them from their place of prominence along the river.

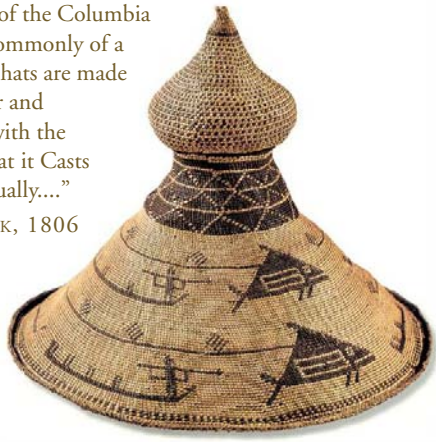
In their creation legends, the Chinookan people of the Columbia-Pacific region were born on Saddle Mountain into a world of water and cedar. The extremely productive environment allowed the early inhabitants to develop a rich life of art, architecture, ceremonies, and an advanced political structure. More importantly, it enabled them to trade.

Trading Network

The mouth of the Columbia, a geographically strategic location in the Columbia-Snake River trading network, was one of the two largest pre-contact tribal trading networks in North America. The center of the Columbia-Snake River trading network was near The Dalles and Celilo Falls. Thousands of native people came to these centers from all directions to trade, feast, socialize, create political family bonds and share information. Lewis and Clark called The Dalles and Celilo Falls area the "Great Mart of all this Country."

Northern tribes brought baskets and berries to trade for horses and buffalo hides from tribes arriving from the plains to the east. Coastal tribes traded whale oil, dried clams, fish, and oysters, dentalium shells for obsidian, and bows from southern tribes. Slaves were always part of the trade. Just as silk and tea would follow the Silk Road across Eurasia, dentalium shells would eventually make their way to tribes in the central and eastern parts of North America via native trade routes across the country. The shells were used as currency for many eastern woodlands and plains tribes.

"Many of the nativs of the Columbia were hats & most commonly of a conic figure....these hats are made of the bark of Cedar and beargrass wrought with the fingers So closely that it Casts the rain most effectually...."
– William Clark, 1806



Hat collected by Lewis and Clark, donated to Peale's Museum

While the Dalles was the main point of congregation between inland and coastal people, the mouth of the Columbia was the place where trade routes from northern California to southeast Alaska linked into the Columbia-Snake River trade network. Chinookan peoples—including the Chinook proper, the Clatsop, and the Cathlamet—controlled trade on the Lower Columbia. They piloted the river and the bar in carved canoes that many observers called the best craft they had ever seen.

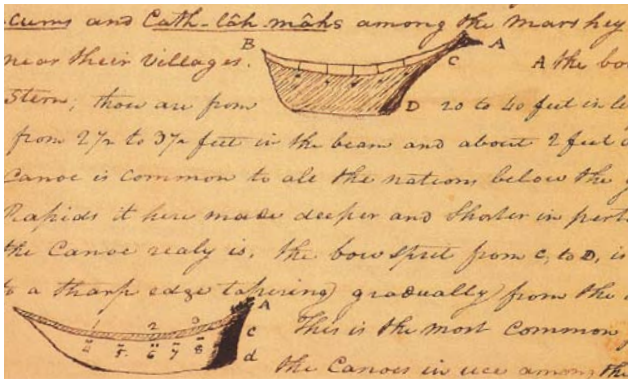
"Those Indians are Certainly the best Canoe navigaters (sic) I ever Saw"
– William Clark, 1805

The *San Francisco Chronicle* called the Chinook canoe,

"as perfect in its kind as any clipper ship launched from American shipyards".

(SF Chronicle, July 1, 1884; in Ruby and Brown, 1976, *The Chinook Indians*).

The Chinook were also some of the best traders that New World explorers had ever encountered. When Europeans arrived in 1792 with goods to trade, the Chinook used their location and trading savvy to their advantage. Westerners like Lewis and Clark found them to be maddeningly adroit in their negotiations, easily matching any Euro-American merchant. Expedition members also found them less impressed by western culture and trade goods. They simply



Drawings of Chinook canoes from the journal of Captain Meriwether Lewis, 1806

wanted what they could trade for advantage with other tribes. As Clark remarked in 1805, *"…I offered him my Watch, handkerchief, a bunch of red beads, and a dollar of the American coin…all of which he refused and demanded 'ti-a'-co-mo-shack' which is Chief beads…few of which we have at this time…"*

Language

Shoalwater Bay Chinook was the base language for Chinook Jargon, a pidgin trade language in use from northern California to southeast Alaska throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, evidence of the wealth and dominance of the Lower Columbia River tribes.

Trade good found in the remains of their villages also indicated a rare level of wealth. Unlike villages upriver that contained mostly foodstuffs and daily articles, Chinookan villages near the river's mouth were rich in trade goods from China, Europe and the United States.

Applying modern western notions of political and family organization to pre-contact nations is very difficult. Chinookan people included groups or bands called Wahkiakums, Cathlamets, Willapas, Clatsops, Chinook, and others. Many of these bands and groups were clearly inter-related, but were independent politically. According to early visitors, all of these peoples spoke dialects of the Chinookan language and, to outsiders, clearly shared trade and a common culture. Near the boundaries of their territories, some bands of Chinookan people mixed with Salish-speaking people including the Chehalis to the north and the Nehalem to the south.

Resilience of the Chinookan People

Though there is much in the history of the Chinook to celebrate, perhaps nothing is more impressive than their persistence. Like all of the tribal nations that occupied the North American continent prior to European conquest, they have suffered disease, dishonesty, and an organized effort to crush their culture and traditions and remove them from their land by forcefully assimilating them into American life. Through all this they have survived and are an active part of the Columbia-Pacific culture today.

Starting in the late 18th century, at least two decades prior to the Lewis and Clark Expedition, the Chinookan people at the mouth of the Columbia were exposed to European diseases to which they had little immunity. The tribes suffered and died from viral influenza, measles, venereal diseases, malaria, and smallpox.

These diseases touched every home and village, suffering upon every family an almost unimaginable tragedy. Lewis and Clark reported that the lower Columbia was the most populated place along their travel route, but it was but a shadow of its former vitality by the time the Expedition had arrived. By 1850, disease had reduced the population of First Americans to perhaps 10 percent of their pre-contact numbers.

Chinook plank house interior

Chinookan women looking out to the Lady Washington

In an 1850 region-wide effort, the U.S. government took action to remove First Americans from their land. Acknowledging the tribes' sovereignty as nations, the U.S. government set about negotiating peace treaties to win a cession of land. In 1851, through the Tansy Point treaties, the tribes ceded three million acres of land from Tillamook Bay to Willapa Bay. The U.S. government paid $91,000. Though the tribes held to the treaties and ceded their lands, the treaties were never ratified by Congress and many of the items promised in the treaties were never delivered. Many Chinookan people left to take up residence on confederated reservations. Others stayed and eked out a living as best they could in the new United States territories.

Other Tribal Links to the Columbia Pacific Area

Besides the Chinookan people, ten other tribal groups trace links to the Columbia Pacific area through historic trade routes and political alliances. These include the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis, Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community, Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla, Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs, the Cowlitz Indian Tribe, Quinault Indian Nation, Wanapum Band, and the Yakama Indian Nation. Many Chinook and Clatsop found new homes within these ten tribes after losing their traditional lands.

The Chinookan Renaissance

First Americans have shown perhaps the greatest amount of that "resilience" that characterizes the region. During the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, tribal people throughout the United States began to assert their sovereignty. Many tribes and tribal groups have become key players in the political, environmental, and economic future of their regions. Rather than fade away, Chinookan people held on to their culture and histories and are working with their Congressional delegation to reassert themselves as a sovereign Indian nation. They are playing a key role in the interpretation of the region's history, as well as in the civic life of communities at the mouth of the river.

4. Exploration, Conquest, and Empire

From 1792 to 1846, the mouth of the Columbia was the center of an international contest for control of large parts of the North American continent. This contest, which started with a race to find a water route across the continent, was rarely pursued through force of arms but rather through trade, commerce, and settlement.

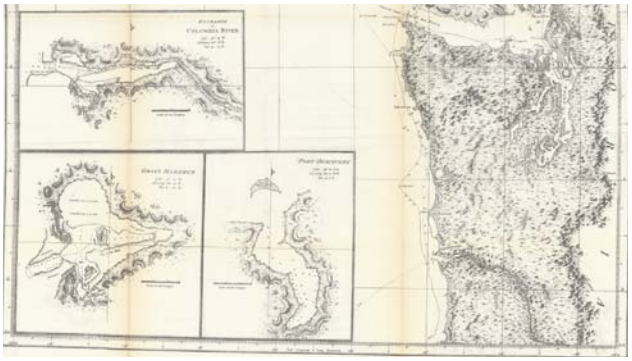
Historical accounts often treat the Northwest during this period as though it was unpeopled and ripe for

settlement. In fact, this period marked a meeting of cultures, "First Contact" between Euroamericans and the tribal powers of the northwest coast. It was a meeting that would have great impact on both cultures. Chinookan power on the Columbia would first wax with the arrival of European traders then wane as the tribes were decimated by western diseases. The tribes would be aggressively pushed off their lands. Americans would gain control and settle the northwest.

By Water

In the late 18th century, Euro-American trade and travel into the continent's interior was largely by water. Merchants used canoes to trade with the tribes for the continent's most valuable natural resource: furs. For western traders, the key to unlocking all that the continent had to offer meant finding a water route. Eastern and central North America had many navigable rivers. Euro-Americans imagined that the west must have at least one great river, too, and it did; but this river, though settled and occupied by thousands of people speaking dozens of languages, was unknown to Euro-Americans.

Finding the great western river became an obsession for fur traders and scientific and government expeditions. The first non-Indian to encounter and identify the river was Spaniard Bruno de Heceta. In August, 1775, Heceta mapped Cape Disappointment and Point Adams, calling them Cape of Saint Roc and Leafy Cape, respectively. He attempted to cross the bar under full sail, but due to the weakened condition of his crew and the river's strong currents, he was unable to do so.



Captain George Vancouver's maps of the mouth of the Columbia River, 1798

THE GOLDEN ROUND

Captains Cook, Gray, and Vancouver helped begin a thriving trading route that included West Coast tribes, the Hawaiian Islands, China and the Far East, the United States and Britain. Called the "Golden Round," it was sparked by the discovery that the Chinese would pay substantial sums for otter fur from North America. As many as 100 trading ships would visit the Columbia between 1792 and 1805. Control of the otter fur trade would spur the contest for empire in years to come.

In 1778, the great British navigator Captain Cook sailed by the river in the night. While he did not find Heceta's river, his expedition traded for otter furs. Cook was tragically killed in Hawai'i early the next year, but his ships carried the furs to China where they discovered that the Chinese would pay handsomely for them. The reports of a potentially lucrative trade route between western North America and China would spur traders from all nations to the West Coast.

In 1788, the controversial Britain sailor John Meares also failed to find a river. While Meares almost created an international incident between Britain and Spain over Vancouver Island, his legacy in the Columbia-Pacific region was to give Cape Disappointment its name to commemorate his failed search.

Meares and Cook were not poor navigators or observers. The entrance to the Columbia looks confusing from the sea. The river has no delta, just a sandy bar. Waves break on this sandy bar similar to the way they break on other parts of the coast. Just inside the mouth is a broad sand island that made the river's mouth look narrower than it was. Also, it must have looked more like a bay than a river owing to its tremendous size.

In August, 1788, American merchant Captain Robert Gray noted an attempt to enter a river at 46 degrees latitude that appears to have been the Columbia. Gray ran aground during the low tide and was unable to proceed. Gray continued north, traded with the tribes for furs, eventually traveling to China then on to Boston, completing the first circumnavigation of the globe by a United States ship.

In April, 1792, British naval expedition Captain George Vancouver passed by the river mouth and noted muddy water flowing into the sea. Noting the sand island and waves breaking on the bar, he discounted the entrance as the mouth of a small river as it looked like most of the rivers emptying into the Pacific north of San Francisco. A few days later, Vancouver headed north and passed Gray back again in the Northwest heading south. Gray had wintered in Clayoquot Sound and was returning to the Columbia believing a river did exist there. Vancouver continued to assert that he thought the river of little account.

On the morning of May 11, 1792, Gray sailed across the bar and into the Columbia River estuary, the first documented non-Indian to do so. Gray's entry into the river constituted the United States' earliest claim to right of possession under 18th century international law. Gray told Vancouver about the river a few weeks later, and Vancouver returned, mapped the river, and made its existence known to the western world.

Stavebolt Landing, Lewis & Clark River, 1892

By Land

While Vancouver mapped the river's lower end, the course of the rest of the river and a hoped-for water route across the continent remained unclear to Euro-American nations. British explorers Alexander McKenzie and Simon Fraser both sought the Columbia by land. Although they found the McKenzie and the Fraser Rivers, respectively, they failed to find the Columbia.

The account of McKenzie's expedition and the fact that the British were on the move to map and control western North America spurred American President Thomas Jefferson to sponsor the Lewis and Clark Expedition. In 1804-1806, the United States' most famous expedition traveled across the continent by land and found the Columbia River but brought back bad news. There was no easy way between the drainages of the Missouri and those of western North America. In addition, the Columbia was powerful, broken by rapids and falls, and not an easy river to navigate. While a trip downstream could be measured in days, the return took months. With no water passage, travel across the continent would have to be by land.

The Lewis and Clark Expedition would have an immediate effect on American interest in the Northwest. Fur baron John Jacob Astor was excited by the expedition's success in recording the lands, resources, and peoples. Astor sought to create a global network of land and sea transportation for fur pelts, goods, information, and services between China, Russia, Europe, the American east coast, and the mouth of the Columbia River. He imagined the United States Empire and United States commerce moving together to the West Coast, hand in hand.

Astor organized an expedition in 1811 to establish Fort Astoria on the Columbia River as a trading post for the Pacific Fur Trade Company. Thus, "Astoria" became the first United States settlement west of the Rockies.

Fort Astoria

The Astor expedition to the Columbia-Pacific region would also be responsible for opening up the key overland route for western settlement in years to come. In 1812 on a journey from Astoria to New York City, Robert Stuart, a partner in the Pacific Fur Company stationed at Fort Astoria, discovered South Pass, a low pass over the Rocky Mountains. This route could be made by wagon from the Missouri and Mississippi valleys and became known as the Oregon Trail.

During the War of 1812, the British gained control over Fort Astoria and changed its name to Fort George. The British Northwest Fur Company took control of the fur trade on the Columbia River. In 1818 the Treaty of Ghent restored Astoria to the Americans but left the Pacific Northwest open to people of both nations. In 1821, the Hudson's Bay Company moved into Fort George.

Artist's rendition of Fort Astoria, 1848

International Boundary

The international boundary in western North America remained unsettled until expansionist President James K. Polk aggressively pushed for a boundary in 1845-46. By that time, furs were played out. The opening of the Oregon Trail had made Americans the majority in the Northwest. Few British Canadians wanted to migrate to the remote region.

Following the Treaty of 1846 between America and Britain, America regained ownership of the mouth of the Columbia River, and the U.S. Army moved into the fort once again known as Fort Astoria. The growing settlement soon became the center of commerce on the lower Columbia River. The Oregon Treaty of 1846 settled the boundary at the 49th parallel.

5. Crossing and Defending the Bar

The Columbia River bar is one of the three most dangerous river entrances on earth. The Columbia River has no delta. Instead, its current blasts at four to seven knots into often prevailing westerly winds and waves. Huge standing waves where the river and ocean meet have been known to topple ships. Conditions can change from calm and serene to life-threatening in as little as five minutes due to wind changes and ocean swells.

Navigating the Columbia Bar

While the bar is hazardous, it is also the gateway to a transportation network that unlocks much of the northwest interior. The high volume of traffic has made the bar infamous. Since 1792, approximately 2,000 large ships have sunk in and around the Columbia bar. It is rightfully known as the "Graveyard of the Pacific."

River guiding started with the Chinook. Although the Chinook did not take ships across the bar, they would guide European and American trade vessels through the river's channels after they cleared the bar. The Chinook's aim was to make sure the ships came to their village.

After the area began to be settled by Americans and Europeans in the 1840s, locals started serving as bar pilots. These early pilots were not trained. The Oregon territorial legislature was so concerned about the bar as an impediment to trade development that in 1846 they created the Oregon Board of Pilot Commissioners. The Board exists to this day and issues licenses to bar pilots.

George Flavel was one of the earliest bar pilots. He and his employees dominated bar piloting from 1851 to the 1870s. The Flavel House, now a landmark owned by the Clatsop County Historical Society, is open to the public. Today bar pilots conduct more than 3,000 ships across the bar at the mouth of the Columbia. It remains the only river in North America that requires bar pilots to enter.

Coast Guard

Life-threatening seas and a nationally important transportation network have made the mouth of the river the location of one of the largest Coast Guard installations in the country. The nearby United States Coast Guard station at Cape Disappointment, Washington and the Air Station in Astoria, Oregon are renowned for operating in some of the roughest sea conditions in the world. Cape Disappointment is also home to the National Motor Lifeboat School, the only school for rough weather and surf rescue operation in the United States. The Motor Lifeboat School, respected internationally as a center of excellence for heavy seas boat operations, is interpreted at the Columbia River Maritime Museum.

U.S. Coast Guard Columbia Lightship in Astoria

Historic photo of Fort Canby

Construction of Jetties

To mitigate the danger to ships coming into the Columbia River, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers completed jetties on the south and north side of the mouth of the Columbia in 1913 and 1917. The jetties aided navigation through the strong currents in the shipping channels by accelerating the flow of the river, which scours sand out of the channels, making them safer for river traffic. The jetties are within the boundaries of Fort Stevens State Park in Oregon and Cape Disappointment State Park in Washington.

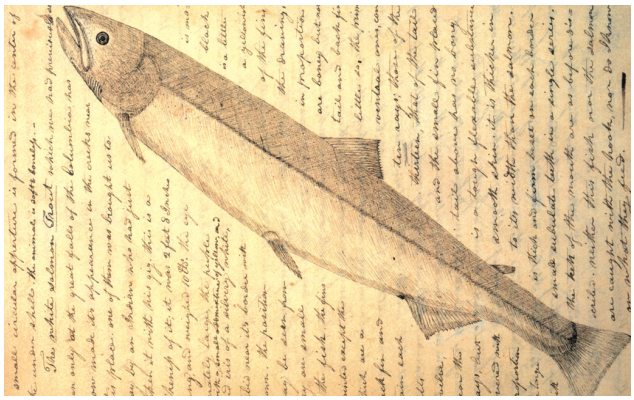
Though the bar is formidable, the United States thought its natural protection was not sufficient to deter enemies from seeking control of the Columbia. Thus the government constructed Fort Stevens on the Oregon shore at Point Adams between 1863 and 1865 to protect the area from the Confederate ships during the Civil War. In 1875, Fort Canby was constructed on the Washington side to provide added protection. Fort Columbia on the north shore of the Columbia was constructed on Chinook Point between 1896 and 1904 also to protect the estuary and harbor. All three forts were active in World War II to guard against Japanese attack.

On June 20, 1942, that attack came. A Japanese submarine fired several shells at Fort Stevens, making it the first military post in the lower 48 states to be attacked by an enemy since 1814.

6. Beginnings of the Northwest Coastal Economy and Culture: Fish, Forests, and Tourism

The settlement of the international boundary at the 49th parallel and the opening of the Oregon Trail sparked the settlement of the Northwest. After 1846, first Portland and then the Puget Sound communities of Tacoma and Seattle became urban centers. The rest of the Northwest became a provider of raw materials. The Columbia-Pacific region, because of its location near the big river, was first in the large scale development of industries that would shape much of the Northwest.

The environment of the Northwest, stretching from northern California to southeast Alaska, shaped the economies of its coastal towns. These communities are dependent on natural resources: trees, fish, rivers,



Salmon sketch from Clark's journal, 1806

oysters, beaches, and scenic landscapes. Although there are exceptions, most coastal communities in the Northwest pursued one or more of three major economic activities: commercial fishing and processing, logging, or tourism.

Commercial Fishing and Processing

The Columbia River mouth was the first and largest center of commercial salmon fishing in the Northwest. The commercial fishery created the region's working waterfronts and attracted many of the region's immigrants.

As noted, whoever fishes at the mouth of the Columbia has a monopoly on the fattest anadromous fish. Since many do not eat on their trip upstream, they are at their fattest at the river's mouth. The Chinookan people took advantage of this and became famous for trading the oil and pounded flesh of the fish that would bear their name, the Chinook salmon.

for transport since the 1850s, it wasn't until the 1860s that market forces came together to make salmon canning not only profitable but a boom industry. Technology had advanced to the point where canning was cheap. The eastern United States and Europe were becoming more populated and developed, creating a demand for meat that could be shipped and stored.

The Hume and Hapgood Company established the first cannery on the Sacramento River in 1864, but the river's runs were too small to meet the cannery's demands so in 1866 Hume and Hapgood established the first cannery on the much larger Columbia River at Eagle Cliff in present day Wahkiakum County.

By 1877, there were 30 canneries along the lower Columbia River supplied by 1,000 gillnet boats. The industry as a whole employed 6,000 people. By 1883 there were 39 canneries and 1,700 commercial fishing

Peacock Spit

Canning

The earliest non-Indian commercial fishing on the river supplied the Hudson's Bay Company post in Fort Vancouver. Starting in 1850, immigrants, often from the California gold fields, came north and hired Indians to harvest barrels of brined salmon for shipment to San Francisco. Brining continued until the early 1870s, but it was soon eclipsed by salmon canning.

While canning had been invented in 1809, and people had been catching salmon and pickling it

McGowan Cannery in Chinook, Washington

boats on the Columbia; and a total of 629,400 cases of salmon at 48 one-pound cans per case were shipped.

The canneries brought people from foreign lands to the mouth of the river. Scandinavian immigrants filled the demand for gillnetters. Chinese laborers already immigrating to the United States to work in gold fields, mining towns, on railroads, levees and other public works projects were recruited to work in the canneries. (Both of these cultural additions to the region are covered in more detail in the narrative for Theme 7.)

After 1883, the industry began to contract. Although a drop in the number of Chinook salmon was one factor, there were also too many canneries to turn a profit. In the early twentieth century, tastes began to change and the demand for canned salmon was not as high. The advent of freezing and refrigeration made it possible to ship fresh fish longer distances.

Diversifying the Catch

While the canneries are gone, fisheries, working waterfronts and the fishing heritage are still alive at the mouth of the Columbia. Commercial boats and processing plants moved to harvest other species including groundfish such as flounder; shrimp; crab; and pelagic fish, such as tuna. The mouth of the Columbia is still an important fishing port and the fishing industry is far from dead. Astoria ranks 15th in the United States in terms of fish and shellfish landings. Gillnetters still work the river albeit in part time work. The Bornstein Fish Processing plant, opened in 2006, is the first new large scale fish plant to be built on the West Coast in two decades. Since 2000, the Port of Astoria has invested 26 million dollars in infrastructure for the fishing fleet, an indication of the role that fishing continues to play in the region.

Buildings associated with the canning commercial fishing industries are some of the most visible historic resources in places like Astoria and Ilwaco. Many of these buildings and piers have been adaptively reused as hotels, restaurants, and other businesses.

Seafood Farming

In Washington's Willapa Bay, farming seafood rather than fishing for it is more common. Willapa Bay produces more oysters than any other location on the West Coast. The bay is thought to be the largest farmed shellfish producer in the U.S., having provided, along with neighboring Grays Harbor, around 42 million pounds of oysters in 2003 at a value of 32 million dollars, according to the Pacific Coast Shellfish Growers Association. The story of Willapa Bay's oysters illustrates the ups and downs that mark a resource-dependent industry.

Fishermen seining for salmon, 1897

Oyster culling in Oysterville

In the early 1850s, the oyster beds of San Francisco Bay had been depleted, and schooners started arriving from the Gold Rush center of San Francisco to harvest the native Olympia oysters. Records indicate that the Olympia oysters could be sold for as much as a dollar a piece. The lucrative business took off and led to the creation of many of Willapa Bay's towns, including historic Oysterville and Nahcotta. Native American men and women were employed as paid labor in the oyster industry.

Oyster sales took a nosedive in the 1870s when eastern oyster seed was brought to re-seed San Francisco Bay, and the city became less dependent on Willapa Bay oysters. By the 1890s, harvesting Willapa's native oysters was no longer profitable, so several growers brought in the seed of eastern oysters. Again, production and profitability soared. Japanese oyster seed was largely substituted for oyster seed from the east coast in the early 20th century after the native oyster was largely decimated.

Logging and Wood Processing

The use of wood and wood products started with the Chinook who were experts in the use of the region's cedar trees to make canoes and houses. Logging by non-Indians began in the northwest in the 1830s with the Hudson's Bay Company and picked up appreciably with the demand for wood in Gold Rush California. In the 1840s and 50s, mills sprung up throughout the Northwest from northern California to Portland and the Washington coast. The technology of those times meant that logging near waters where log floats could be used for transport was the most cost effective.

Loggers

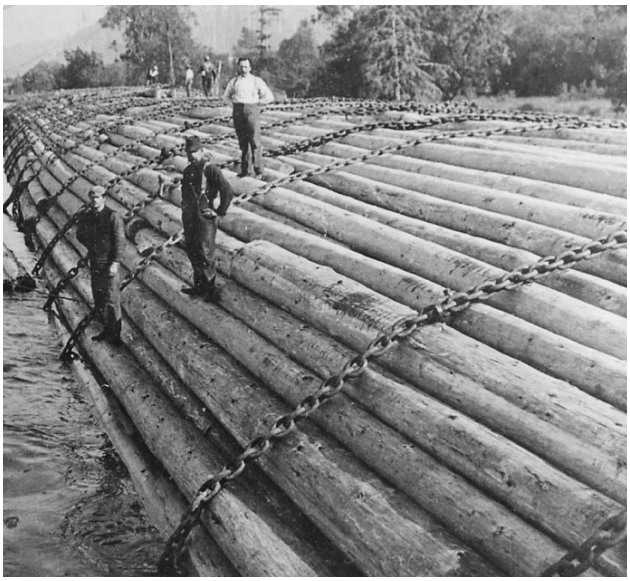
Example of logging in the Youngs Bay Watershed

In the 1880s and 1890s, the timber industry in the Northwest began to change from small-scale, ox-powered logging near water to large-scale logging. The lower Columbia was at the center of this change. By the late 1880s, timber in the Midwest was played out and lumberman moved to the forests of the Pacific Northwest.

One of these individuals, Simon Benson, moved to the Northwest in 1880. After several ups and downs, he introduced technologies that changed the timber industry. In 1891 he brought the first steam-powered timber railway to the Northwest near Cathlamet, Washington. He began using the steam donkey, an invention from California, and rail lines which began replacing oxen teams as the primary mover of logs. Because the steam donkey and rail lines could work in spring and fall mud, logging could continue for most of the year not just during the dry seasons.

Benson also introduced the "Benson log raft" near the Clatsop County-Columbia County border. These rafts were huge ocean-going rafts that could safely transport millions of board feet by sea down the coast to markets in southern California.

The remnants of this age of timber include rail lines (now logging roads) along the area's rivers. One of these rail lines ends at the remains of the "wet sort" yard near Fort Clatsop. The wet sort yard, a place where logs were sorted and formed into log rafts, was the largest in the region and operated until the 1980s. Visitors can still see the pilings near the fort where log booms were assembled.



Log raft on the Columbia River, 1902

Astoria Country Club, Clatsop Plains

Post War Building Boom

After World War II, demand for framing timber and plywood to supply the post-war southern California building boom fueled a huge expansion in the woods products industry throughout the Northwest. This phase of logging reached its peak in the 1950s and 60s. Mills were built at many locations in the region on both sides of the river.

After that several factors conspired to contract the industry. The recession of the 1970s slowed housing starts. By the 1980s, forests in the southeast had regenerated and could compete with northwest forests.

Industry Today

Today many in the logging industry are exploring ways to stay in the woods. While some mills still operate, others are exploring forestry restoration, Smartwood and other specialty market certifications, woody biomass energy production, recycling, salvage and carbon credits to supplement forest revenues.

Agriculture

Most of the Northwest's production of cranberries is within Pacific County, Washington and Clatsop County, Oregon. Though there are only slightly more than 1,600 acres in production in Washington, these acres produce 20 percent of the national harvest of cranberries.

In the past the industry has experienced both periods of stagnation and strong growth. For decades cranberries were not in demand in America except during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. Established bogs on the East Coast already filled this market demand. Also a number of problems plagued cranberry growing in the region. Help arrived in the early 1920s when D.J. "Jim" Crowley set up the Cranberry Research Station outside of Long Beach, Washington and conducted tests over a 30-year period to solve problems related to pests, frost, and other local conditions.

Growers did not immediately adopt these recommendations. These agricultural hardships combined with the Great Depression of the 1930s caused the industry to dwindle, and only a few highly committed farmers remained active. The next 40 years brought many changes to cultivation methods, increasing product yields and quality, including the major operational shift from dry to wet harvesting of berries in the 1940s.

In 1992, cranberry growers formed the Pacific Coast Cranberry Research Foundation and purchased the Research Station and 40 acres of farmland. Scientific research and cranberry development continues in this location and is exported even into Canada. There is also a non-profit Cranberry Museum on the property

Cranberry harvest on the Long Beach penninsula

which illustrates Crowley's "latent heat" discovery, now broadly utilized nation-wide to reduce crop loss from frostbite.

In recent years the demand for cranberries has increased to an all time high and the industry is strong and stable. State resources have broadened the marketing of the cranberry to include health-conscious consumers both in the U.S. and overseas.

Other agricultural activities occurring within the proposed National Heritage Area include dairy, small truck farms, and small herd beef production.

Tourism

The northwest Oregon and southwest Washington coasts are the primary coastal destination for the millions of residents that live in the Willamette Valley and Puget Sound. This has been the case for more than 130 years. The Columbia-Pacific region is the place where many people from Northwest urban centers—Seattle, Portland, and cities bordering the I-5 corridor—get their first taste of the coast.

Railroad magnate Ben Holladay established Seaside House in 1870, making Seaside, Oregon the second coastal resort established in Oregon. Seaside and Cannon Beach, Oregon and the Long Beach Peninsula in Washington have been used as coastal retreats by political figures from Salem and Olympia as well as vacation spots for everyday working families. Much of this history is documented in early hospitality buildings and sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Astoria Yacht Club

7. Immigration

From 1792 until the 1830s, the mouth of the Columbia River was a place of many ethnicities. This was the era of maritime and land-based fur trade, and trading stations like the Hudson's Bay Company were famously diverse. Hawaiians, Europeans, a few Iroquois from eastern North America, freed blacks, and black slaves all traded, mingled, and sometimes married with tribal peoples along the river. During the fur trade era, missionaries also came to the region. They too married with tribal peoples. Famously missionary Solomon Smith married Celiaste, daughter of the same Chief Coboway whom Lewis and Clark had treated and they set up the Smith Mission on nearby Smith Lake.

While the fur trade era was common to the entire Columbia below Celilo Falls, the later mass immigration of Chinese and Scandinavian laborers would be unique to the mouth of the river.

The Columbia River served as a major artery carrying immigrants into the United States. In the 1890s, it became one of three quarantine and entry stations along the West Coast of North America. Especially significant to the region were immigrants from China and Scandinavia, who were drawn to the region by the economic booms created by the salmon canneries, the logging industry, and other public works project.

Chinese

In 1872, the Hume and Hapgood Company were the first to hire Chinese cannery workers and other companies soon followed suit. By 1880 at least 2,045 Chinese were working at the mouth of the river constituting almost 30 percent of Clatsop County's population. Chinese schools and businesses began and thrived. Many public works projects throughout the region including dikes and roads in service today were built by Chinese hands.

Unfortunately, the Chinese story in the Columbia-Pacific region is a painful one. European labor became concerned about competition nationwide from Chinese labor and in1882, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, severely limiting immigration to the United States. In 1885, Congress passed the Foran Act, preventing the recruitment of overseas labor. But the development that caused most Chinese to leave the area was the mechanization of the cannery and packing industries in 1905. Smith Butchering Machines could gut and clean as many salmon as 30 to 40 skilled workers.

At the train depot in Seaview, Washington, 1910

While a few prominent Chinese families remain in the Columbia-Pacific region, for the thousands that once lived here, sites on the national register are all that remain.

Scandinavians

Scandinavians also began coming to the mouth of the Columbia to work in the salmon industry. For the most part, Scandinavians operated the gillnet boats that supplied the canneries and packing plants. Swedes came first, followed by Norwegians, and a huge influx of Finns. Starting in the late 19th century, these new immigrants went to work not only in the fishing industry but in the logging camps and mills.

Because of their large numbers relative to the over-all population, Scandinavians created a distinct ethnic community at the mouth of the river. By 1920, there were approximately 3,839 ethnic Finns in Astoria, including both immigrants and their children, making up over 27 percent of the town's population. Together with the Norwegian and first and second

generation Swedish Americans, these groups accounted for 45 percent of Astoria's population. Dozens of buildings on the National Register of Historic Places document the Scandinavian settlements at the river's mouth.

Scandinavians in the Columbia-Pacific region played a large role in the history of organized labor in the Northwest. Key events include the 1896 Astoria Fisherman's strike and the region wide millworkers and loggers strike in the summer of 1917, both events that received national attention. At the mouth of the Columbia, Scandinavian social organizations such as the Finnish Brotherhood and Suomi Hall helped to reinforce cohesion among laborers.

Immigration Continues

The latest group of immigrants to the Columbia-Pacific Region is from Mexico. Today Hispanic immigrants constitute one in six residents in the Columbia-Pacific region and one in every fourth school child. Hispanic immigrants have largely taken work in the same resource industries that in earlier eras employed Chinese and Scandinavians. They are the latest group of people engaged in the region's heritage livelihoods. Like those who have come before, they are opening restaurants and businesses, assembling athletic leagues and social clubs.

Suomi Hall Finish Brotherhood in Astoria, OR

19th and Franklin, Astoria, OR

8. Public Treasure

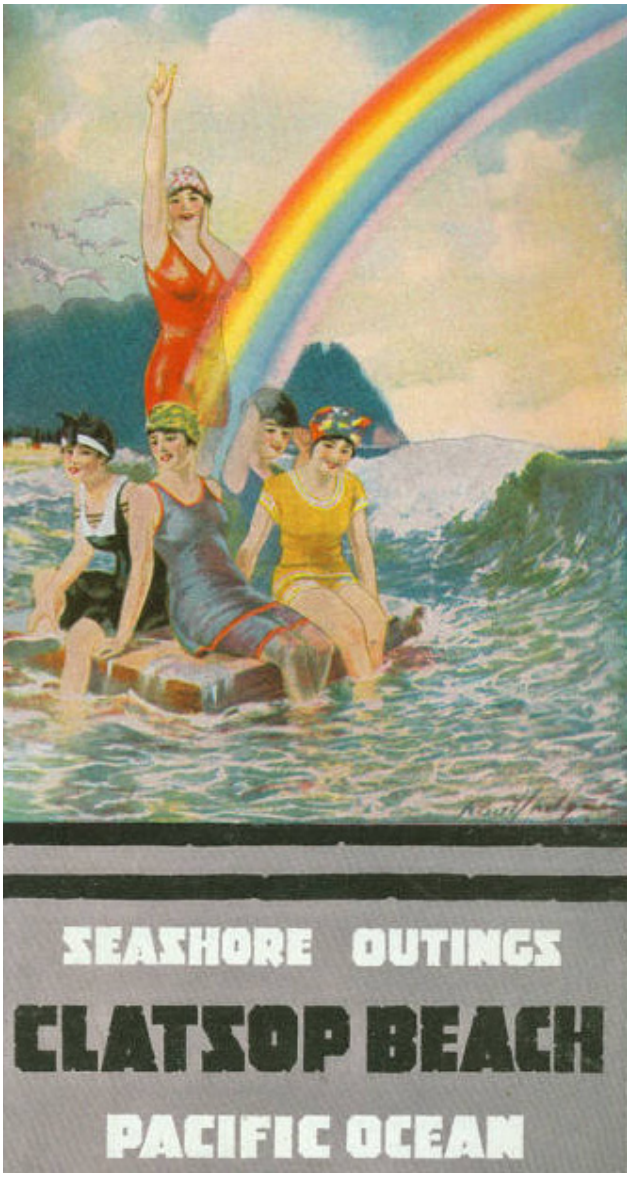
In Oregon, the proposed project area contains key places that mark the history of public access to the Northwest coast. The events that occurred there sparked actions such as Oregon's Beach Bill, one of the model pieces of legislation in the United States allowing public access to the coast.

Beach Access

Clatsop County was the logical place for debate over public beach access to begin. The region contains the longest series of beaches and dunes along the West Coast. Until the 1930s, these beaches were the primary routes of ground transportation and were actually marked as highways on state maps.

When the debate began, it was not about public recreation; it was about commerce and

transportation. In 1874, the Oregon State Land Board had started selling submerged lands. Citizens became concerned about the impact this would have on public transportation. In 1899, the Oregon legislature declared Clatsop County's beaches from the Columbia River to the south county line as a public highway. In 1911, Oregon elected former state land agent Oswald West to the governor's office. West was a major proponent of the development of transportation in Oregon. In 1913, he declared all of the state's beaches, from Washington to California as public highways.



Clatsop Beach brochure, 1917

Transportation

The source of Oswald West's inspiration and experience with Oregon beaches and tidelands was his coastal retreat in Cannon Beach, within the study area. This retreat is on the National Register of Historic Place and is open to the public. Oswald West State Park, a few miles south of this retreat, was created and named in his honor.

The beaches would remain the primary overland thoroughfares until 1919 when the citizens passed a ballot measure and the Oregon Coast Highway was built. Construction would start in the most populated area, between Astoria and Seaside. Conde McCollough, a civil engineer from Iowa became known as Oregon's Master Bridge Builder. The first two of many spectacular bridges he built along the coast were in Clatsop County; these are the old Youngs Bay Bridge (1921) and the Lewis and Clark River Bridge (1924). Both of these bridges are still in use though they are no longer part of the coastal highway system.

In the 1966, Oregon governor Tom McCall staged a news conference at Haystack Rock near Cannon Beach to galvanize support for an Oregon Beach Bill that made everything up to 16 feet elevation from sea level open to public access. It became a model for similar legislation in other coastal areas.

CONCLUSION

These themes that make the proposed Columbia-Pacific NHA nationally distinctive are diverse and interwoven. They have at their center the Columbia River and its influence on natural resources, cultural traditions, diversity, trade and commerce, and the economic livelihood of the region.

These themes woven together convey a tapestry of the interrelated stories of the Columbia-Pacific, spanning pre-history to the present and form the foundation for programs, projects, investments, interpretation and stewardship for the proposed NHA. Additional documentation related to the region's unique and nationally-important heritage can be found in Chapter 7.