

# History and Historic Places

*"Maintain  
small town  
character!"*

*"The community,  
its culture, and  
people make  
White Salmon  
unique."*

Wolford  
Store

Fruit Growers  
Union

White Salmon  
Valley Bank

Blacksmith

Everhart  
Building

Colburn  
Hotel

North Bank  
Laundry

1906

nd





# HISTORY AND HISTORIC PLACES

## Background

### Environmental Context

The city of White Salmon lies in a transition zone between the maritime climate west of the Cascade Mountain Range and the dry continental climate of the intermountain region to the east. This transition zone is characterized by mild, dry summers and cool, wet winters. White Salmon is sometimes called the “[Land where the sun meets the rain.](#)”

Successive floods, the Bretz or Lake Missoula floods of the late Pleistocene and early Holocene Epoch, scoured the land in some areas and deposited sediment elsewhere. The central city of White Salmon is situated on a bluff approximately 550 feet above the Columbia River. The city also includes approximately three-quarters of a mile of river frontage, including two established fishing sites under tribal jurisdiction. The area’s geologic history and climate greatly influenced White Salmon’s pre-contact and post-contact culture and history.

### Inhabitants

Humans have inhabited the Mid-Columbia Plateau and Columbia River basin for at least 12,000 years. The earliest peoples developed diverse cultural patterns and several subdialects of the Sahaptin and Chinookan language groups. A common bond among Mid-Columbia inhabitants was the Columbia River, an artery of commerce and cultural exchange and its natural resources. The abundance of salmon was central to the life cycles of early inhabitants.

Over time, the population of the Mid-Columbia region shifted from a hunter-gather subsistence pattern to more settled villages beginning around 4,000 years ago. One of the oldest known settlement sites in the area, south of Klickitat County in Oregon, dates to 9,785 years ago.<sup>7</sup>

The four tribes with treaty rights within the area include the Yakama Nation, Warm Springs, Umatilla, and Nez Perce. Locally, tribal people fished for salmon in the rivers, hunted game in the upland forests and meadows, and harvested food and medicine in the prairies. Within the Mid-Columbia region lithic sites, rock cairns, huckleberry trenches, quarries, camps and villages, and pictographs and petroglyphs are physical evidence of the long relationship of the native people to the land.



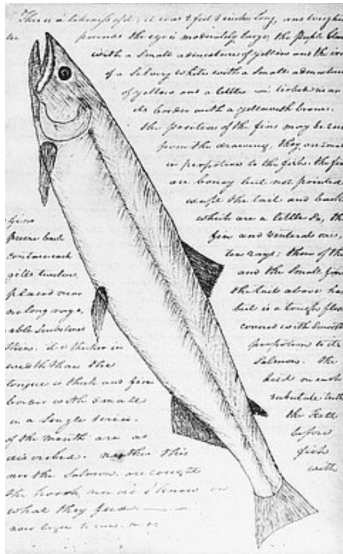
*Tsagaglalat, “She who Watches” petroglyph. [The Confluence Project](#). Photo by Steve Terrill.*

<sup>7</sup> [https://dahp.wa.gov/sites/default/files/Field%20Guide%20to%20WA%20Arch\\_0.pdf](https://dahp.wa.gov/sites/default/files/Field%20Guide%20to%20WA%20Arch_0.pdf)

Prior to contact with Euro-Americans, the upper Chinookan people resided in oval or circular pit houses. Constructed with a roof of poles, brush, or mats and partially sunk into the earth, some circular pit houses could be up to 50 feet in diameter and 12 feet in depth. In Klickitat County, a good example of a pit house village is the Rattlesnake Creek Site located on Department of Natural Resources lands north of Husum<sup>8</sup>. More than 2,000 archaeological sites have been recorded in Klickitat County.<sup>9</sup>

The earliest written evidence of contact between Euro-Americans and the indigenous population in the White Salmon area, the journals of Lewis and Clark, indicate a village near the river that Lewis and Clark named the White Salmon River. The Corps of Discovery members observed multiple subterranean structures with conical roofs as they traded with the native population who spoke an Upper Chinookan dialect, (Moulton 1991: 118- 122).

Clark's White Salmon Trout



Oregon Historical Society

## Early Settlers

After the Lewis and Clark Expedition's brief 1805 and 1806 visit to the White Salmon River, direct Euro-American presence in the area was limited. In 1843, the first wagon caravan of 900 emigrants reached The Dalles in the Oregon Territory; however, most early Euro-American settlers journeyed to the fertile Willamette Valley. In 1853, Erastus and Mary Joslyn, traveling downriver by steamboat, disembarked at The Dalles. Later, they continued downriver and spotted fertile flat land on the north bank of the Columbia River in the Washington Territory, approximately one mile east of the White Salmon River, and purchased their homesite from the Klickitat Tribe. After the Klickitat Tribe moved onto the Yakama Reservation in 1855, Euro-American settlement accelerated. In 1867, Mary's brother James Warner arrived and established a post office. In 1874, A. H. and Jennie Jewett arrived and settled on the bluff, today's White Salmon. The Suksdorf family arrived the same year and settled on the flatland along the Columbia River, now Bingen.<sup>10</sup>

## Early Development

Agriculture and natural resource extraction drove the early local economy. Early inhabitants of White Salmon and the surrounding area raised cattle for the eastern mines and harvested timber to fuel the steamboats. (HRA 1995 and McCoy 1987). Wheat farming and salmon harvesting also built the local economy. The Jewett family are often credited with being the catalyst of the renowned White Salmon Valley horticulture industry. The Jewett's nursery and resort became a nationally known showplace for visitors. The Jewett family was instrumental in development of the City's water system, and they made donations of land for Bethel Church.

<sup>8</sup> A Field Guide to Washington State Archaeology, DAHP (2003)

<sup>9</sup> DAHP Archaeological Sites Per County, March 2017, <https://dahp.wa.gov/sites/default/files/ArchyStatusMap2017.pdf> History of White Salmon, Washington, Gorge Connection.com, <http://www.gorgeconnection.com/white-salmon/history.php#>

<sup>10</sup> Clark White Salmon Trout Image is a copy of a sketch made by William Clark in February 1806, while Expedition members were at Fort Clatsop near the mouth of the Columbia River. [Oregon Historical Society](https://www.oregonhistoricalsociety.org/)

A ferry provided transport service between the White Salmon settlements, and Hood River, Oregon. The community constructed the Dock Grade Road to the Palmer Ferry Landing west of the present-day approach to the White Salmon-Hood River Bridge. Horse-drawn wagons transported cargo and passengers to a flight of stairs that led up the embankment to the town of White Salmon (McCoy 1987:71-80).

In the early twentieth century horticulture, particularly raising fruits and berries, was an important economic driver in the area. A combination of horticulture, railroads and roads, and land speculation led to the “Apple Boom” of the 1910s. (Patee 2016) As prosperity increased, so did discord among the upland and lowland families resulting in the construction of what today is known as Dock Grade Road. The questions of the day included where the roads, railroad, post office, and water source should be built – close to the river or on the upland. Theodore Suksdorf platted Bingen in the lowlands in 1892. Bingen opened its post office in 1896. Mr. Jewett platted White Salmon and the town became incorporated in 1907.

## 20th Century Trends

The Spokane, Portland, and Seattle railroad came through the Columbia River Gorge in 1908 with a stop at Bingen. Was the station to be named after Bingen or White Salmon? The compromise was to name the “Bingen-White Salmon” railroad station after both towns. Thereafter, the two cities, Bingen and White Salmon, grew side by side but at different elevations. That same year electric lights came to White Salmon, along with the first fire hydrant, and in 1910 the first sidewalks were built. The Condit Dam on the White Salmon River was completed in 1913 and provided electricity to the area and as far away as Camas, Washington.<sup>11</sup>

The Klickitat County government began planning the current road connecting Bingen and White Salmon, now Washington State Route 141 (SR14), in the 1910s and local volunteers, under County supervision, began construction of the road in the 1920s<sup>12</sup>. The Hood River Bridge over the Columbia River opened in 1924. SR 141 provided a vital link between the Columbia River and interior locations of Trout Lake and Glendwood. SR 141 became to be known as White Salmon’s Main Street. SR 141 Alternative now bypasses downtown White Salmon and serves as a principal corridor to the inland recreation areas near Husum, Trout Lake, Mt Adams wilderness and recreation areas, and the Bird Creek Meadows on the Yakama Reservation<sup>13</sup>. The economic history of White Salmon has been driven by canoes, trails, ferries, steamboats, trains, and roads<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> The Condit Dam was listed on the National Register of Historic Places, but environmental and cultural concerns—as well as the cost associated with relicensing the dam—resulted in its removal in 2011. See, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4LxMHmw3Z-U> and [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HES\\_-dKUE9I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HES_-dKUE9I)

<sup>12</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washington\\_State\\_Route\\_141](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washington_State_Route_141)

<sup>13</sup> WSDOT Corridor Sketch, 4.2.2018. <https://wsdot.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2017/09/14/CSS351-SR141-SR14JctBingen-SkamanianCountyLine.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> For local newspaper stories: <http://homepages.rootsweb.com/~westklic/wsbshist.html>

In the 1970s White Salmon civic leaders, perhaps because the Suksdorf family had named the settlement Bingen after their ancestral home of Bingen am Rhein<sup>15</sup>, were attracted by a minor national trend of revitalizing a community by adopting an architectural theme. The faux Bavarian theme seemed to work well in mountainous Leavenworth, WA so why not in White Salmon, too? While Leavenworth succeeded in drawing tourist to its theme park-like town, White Salmon did not fare as well. Only a few buildings retain any faux Bavarian design

Congress passed the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act (Act) and President Ronald Reagan signed the Act on November 17, 1986. The Act mandates the protection and enhancement of scenic, cultural, natural and recreation resources and the protection and support of the Gorge economy<sup>16</sup>. The Act designated a total of 292,500 acres for special protection on both sides of the Columbia River from the outskirts of Portland-Vancouver in the west to the semi-arid regions of Wasco and Klickitat counties in the east. The Act created 13 urban exempts areas including the White Salmon/Bingen Urban Exempt Area. Most residential and commercial development within the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area is encouraged to take place within one of the 13 designated Urban Exempt Areas.

White Salmon, since the late 1990s, has become a destination for recreationists and tourists. The community offers all city services and provides retail, medical, cultural, educational, and recreational facilities. The community of White Salmon has grown from its birth in 1907 and has established itself as a vital part of the Columbia River Gorge.

## Local Resources of Historic Interest

### Historic and Cultural Sites and Structures

Community members are proud of White Salmon's cultural heritage and history. To preserve and share that heritage, citizens of White Salmon and West Klickitat County established the West Klickitat County Historical Society in 1984. The Society's collection of data, artifacts, and pictorials are housed in the Gorge Heritage Museum, formerly the Bingen Congregational Church (circa 1912).

The West Klickitat Historic Society and knowledgeable community members consider many late nineteenth and early twentieth-century buildings to be of local historical significance. The White Salmon 2012 Comprehensive Plan identified several notable locally significant buildings. See Table 11.

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<sup>15</sup> Faux Bavarian style, <http://historichedalles.org/bingen-white-salmon/>

<sup>16</sup> "The purposes of sections 544 to 544p of this title are— (1) to establish a national scenic area to protect and provide for the enhancement of the scenic, cultural, recreational, and natural resources of the Columbia River Gorge; and (2) to protect and support the economy of the Columbia River Gorge area by encouraging growth to occur in existing urban areas and by allowing future economic development in a manner that is consistent with paragraph (1)."

Table 11. Notable historic properties (2012 Comprehensive Plan inventory)

Site	Circa	Location/History
Red Springhouse	1870	Jewett Boulevard
Palmer Landing	1875	Vanguard Nursery
Jewett Farm Resort	1888	E Jewett Boulevard & 10th Avenue
Stone House	1889	10th Avenue at Jewett Farm
Sampson Electric	1900	121 Main Avenue <i>formerly Dewey Theater</i>
Coffin House	1900	NW Lincoln & Garfield <i>maternity hospital</i>
Pioneer Building	1904	216 E Jewett Boulevard
Lauterbach House	1904	245 W Jewett Boulevard
St. Joseph Catholic Church	1912	240 NW Washington Street
Hunsaker Building	1905	E Jewett Boulevard & Church Street
United Methodist Church	1910	341 N Main Avenue
Eyrie Resort	1910	464 Eyrie Road
Red & White Grocery Store	1910	E Jewett Boulevard & 1st Avenue
Kloster Building	1930	E Jewett Boulevard.
Pioneer Cemetery Park	1880	Tohomish & NE Pioneer Place

## Evolving Inventory of Historic and Cultural Resources

### Local Historic Resource Strategies

Many communities have adopted historic preservation programs which include:

- a methodology for conducting a local survey of historic or cultural resources;
- criteria for establishing local historic or cultural significance;
- creating a City-administered preservation commission or committee; and
- adoption of an historic preservation ordinance.

White Salmon could employ such proactive strategies. Until such time, however, identification of historic resources in White Salmon will be based on guidance and programs developed by state or national agencies, or what someone locally thinks is old and of historic interest. Creating a more robust historic and cultural resource preservation program requires a commitment from the local government, dedicated local supporters, and the guidance of qualified professionals.

The Washington State Department of Archeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) is the primary state agency supporting historic preservation and cultural resource programming. DAHP is an excellent resource for professional guidance on:

- [Historic building survey and inventory](#);
- [Archaeology survey and inventory](#);
- [Model historic preservation ordinances](#);
- [Historic research and building review](#);
- [Historic Preservation law](#);
- [Certified Local Government](#) (CLG) program; and the
- [Main Street](#) program.

## **Evolving Historic Resources**

History evolves and what was once new or familiar may gather historic or cultural significance over time. Consequently, the inventory of historic resources changes and expands through the years. Best inventory practices are for a community to reevaluate the local inventory each time the community updates its comprehensive plan.

The George and Louisa Aggers House, 464 SW Eyrie Road, known as “Overlook,” is in the Urban Exempt Area. In 2020, the property was listed in the Washington State Historic Register<sup>17</sup>. Overlook was once part of a small 46-acre cherry orchard business on the western edge of White Salmon. The 1910 craftsman style farmhouse serves as an excellent example of Arts & Crafts dwellings from the early twentieth century.<sup>18</sup>

White Salmon is also home to a notable collection of early to mid-twentieth century commercial and institutional buildings, several of which were designed and constructed by Day Walter Hilborn, one of the most prolific and important architects in the history of southwest Washington State<sup>19</sup>. Hilborn is credited with at least seven commissions in White Salmon, including the White Salmon Post Office (1941), B.O.E. Elks # 163, Bethel Congregational Church (1947), a movie theater, rodeo grandstand, and several private residences.

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<sup>17</sup> Overlook House. [https://www.columbiagorgeneews.com/archive/located-on-eyrie-road/article\\_f8ac48dd-2aa2-5354-9802-e0054675e54c.html](https://www.columbiagorgeneews.com/archive/located-on-eyrie-road/article_f8ac48dd-2aa2-5354-9802-e0054675e54c.html)

<sup>18</sup> <https://dahp.wa.gov/historic-preservation/find-a-historic-place>

<sup>19</sup> See Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP), “Day W. Hilborn” <https://dahp.wa.gov/bio-for-day-w-hilborn>. See also, [Project list - compiled by Michael Houser, Sept 2006 \(revised June 2012\)](#) and [Day W. Hilborn: Built to Last \(PowerPoint Presentation\)](#)



The Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) maintains an inventory of historic and cultural resources. Some of the properties are eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). See Appendix A, White Salmon Area Inventory of Historic Resources, DAHP - Select. Currently, there are no properties in White Salmon listed in the NRHP; however, investigation by DAHP representatives has determined that several historic resources may be eligible for listing in the NRHP.

The importance of periodic updates to the historic inventory is illustrated in Table 12. A decade ago, the community might not have considered the cluster of residential dwellings to have architectural significance. However, in 2020 a team of qualified historic and architectural professionals prepared Historic Property Report(s) for these residences and concluded that the cluster of houses may be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places because of the local architectural character.

*Table 12. Cluster of houses identified by State of Washington as historic and significant which may be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (2020)*

Location	DAHP Property ID #	Location
267 SE Oak Street	722160	Circa 1920 residence English Cottage Style
301 SE Oak Street	722159	1918 residence Tudor style
345 W Jewett Boulevard	722162	1973 Northwest Regional Style
435 W Jewett Boulevard	722187	1965 residence Prairie Ranch style, aka Van Alstine House
447 W. Jewett Boulevard	722163	1940 residence Cottage/Colonial Revival
475 SE Oak Street	722161	1974 residence Northwest Regional style

## Existing Plans and Regulations

The White Salmon Comprehensive Plan encourages the public and private identification, documentation, and preservation of historic resources. The White Salmon Municipal Code does not include discreet chapters dedicated to implement such plan polices. The City evaluates potential impacts to historic and cultural resources through Chapter 18.20, Environmental Protection, which implements the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA)<sup>20</sup>.

The White Salmon Shoreline Master Program (SMP) provides for protection and restoration of buildings, sites, and areas having archaeological, historical, cultural, or scientific value or significance within designated shorelands<sup>21</sup>. Shoreline jurisdiction within the White Salmon urban area is limited to lands adjacent to the Columbia River. Those shorelands include “Native American Tribes Fishing Sites.”

<sup>20</sup> See RCW 43.21C and WAC 197-11.

<sup>21</sup> See SMP Section 3.4, Archaeological, Historic, and Cultural Resources.

The Goals and Policies section incorporates many of the SMP policies relating to historic and cultural resources.

There are several Washington State and federal statutes relating to the identification and protection of historic sites and resources, which may affect development activity in White Salmon. See Chapter II, Appendix A, State and Federal Laws, relating to the identification and protection of Historic and Cultural Resources.

## Goals and Policies

Identifying and preserving locally significant historic and cultural resources is an important component of sustaining a community's cultural identity. The thought is sometimes expressed as, "How do we know it is us without our past?" Stewardship of existing built resources protects embedded energy, thereby reducing energy consumption and waste products. Protecting local historic districts can raise property values, create new jobs, and generate tourism. In White Salmon, the opportunities to create a sustainable future can be founded on natural and historic resource conservation and promotion. To achieve such a sustainable future, the City of White Salmon adopts the following goals and policies.

### ***Goal H&HP-1. Identify and document historic and cultural resources within the White Salmon urban area.***

Policy H&HP-1-1: Develop and maintain a comprehensive survey and inventory of historic and cultural resources within the White Salmon urban area which is updated during each major update of the comprehensive plan.

### ***Goal H&HP-2. Encourage and promote private, public, and tribal parties to support the city's archaeological, historical, and cultural goals and objectives.***

### ***Goal H&HP-3. Recognize the importance of educational materials and programming to stimulate awareness of the role that preservation and promotion of historic resources play in the city's future.***

Policy H&HP-3.1: Promote the understanding of a diverse set of historical perspectives and embrace White Salmon's rich and diverse cultural history.

### ***Goal H&HP-4. Consider historic and cultural resource sites and values into City plans where appropriate.***

Policy H&HP-4.1: Provide encouragement and support for public and private efforts to seek grants and other sources of funds for preservation education, promotion, or development projects.

### ***Goal H&HP-5. Maintain and preserve public locations of historical and cultural significance that are listed on local and state historic registers.***

### ***Goal H&HP-6. Encourage private property owners with locations of historical and cultural significance to maintain and preserve historic and cultural resources.***