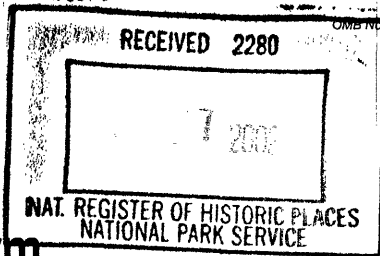


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form



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COVER

This form is for use in documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

New Submission Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

AGRICULTURE IN THURSTON COUNTY: FIRST SETTLEMENT TO 1951

B. Associated Historic Contexts

(name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographic area, and chronological period for each)

C. Form Prepared by

name/title SHANNA STEVENSON, SENIOR PLANNER
organization THURSTON REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL date SEPTEMBER 2001
street & number 2404 HERITAGE COURT SW #B telephone (360) 786-5480
city or town OLYMPIA state WASHINGTON zip code 98502-6031

D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Planning and Evaluation. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official

1-30-02

Date

Washington State Historic Preservation Office

State or Federal agency and bureau

I, hereby, certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Signature of the Keeper of the National Register

3/20/02

Date of Action

Table of Contents for Written Narrative

Provide the following information on continuation sheets. Cite the letter and the title before each section of the narrative. Assign page numbers according to the instructions for continuation sheets in *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 16B). Fill in page numbers for each section in the space below.

	Page Numbers
E. Statement of Historic Contexts (If more than one historic context is documented, present them in sequential order.)	E1 to 32
F. Associated Property Types (Provide description, significance, and registration requirements.)	
Cut-Over Land Farmsteads	F-1 to 4
Specialized Farming Buildings/Structures	F-4 to 5
Aquaculture Sites and Structures	F-5 to 6
Early Settlement Farmsteads	F-6 to 7
Grange Halls	F-8 to 8
G. Geographical Data	G,H -1
H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods (Discuss the methods used in developing the public property listing.)	G, H-1
I. Major Bibliographical References (List major written works and primary location of additional documentation: State Historic Preservation Office, other State agency, Federal agency, local government, university, or other, specifying repository.)	I -1 to 5

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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AGRICULTURE IN THURSTON COUNTY:
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E. Statement of Historic Contexts

(If more than one historic context is documented, present them in sequential order.)

Introduction:

The agricultural history of Thurston County extends from the pre-historic period when Native Americans burned prairies to facilitate the growth of root crops such as camas and to promote easier harvesting of berries and acorns.

In the 1830s the Hudson's Bay Company established large farms and stations in and near present day Thurston County. Later early Euro-Americans settlers took up large claims on the open prairies and river bottoms under liberal land laws. As the forested sections of the county were harvested, towns grew up to serve the lumber processing industry, and loggers and their families established small farms on cut-over lands left from the logging. Gradually these farms developed into small-scale subsistence and commercial enterprises selling primarily eggs and milk.

After the turn of the 20th century, some large scale farms such as the Brown Farm, Cannery Ranch and Cloverfields Dairy were established along with an irrigation district in Yelm. Berry farms flourished in the 1930s and 1940s. After World War II the small subsistence farms waned and larger farms were assembled. By the 1950s specialty crops such as lavender, poultry dairy, and holiday greens such as holly and Christmas trees began to develop.

Throughout the county's history, aquaculture has been an important agricultural endeavor. This practice has its roots in Native American harvesting and use of oysters, clams and mussels and over the years has evolved with changes in technology and environmental conditions.

Thurston County's agriculture has gone through many phases from the large land grants of the 19th century to the small cut-over farms of the 20th. Surprisingly, many farms and farmsteads survive almost intact from the 1850's period. Also good examples of the cut-over farms also survive.

The following context statement provides background and information with which to evaluate their various property types which reflect these periods and types of agriculture. Perhaps the most important part of the historical context is to understanding the importance of the small cut-over farms in the economic history of the area. By establishing their significance, efforts can be made to preserve the farmsteads of all periods as technology and economic conditions change.

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E. Statement of Historic Contexts (cont'd)

Organization of the Multiple Property Group:

The multiple property documentation form—Agriculture in Thurston County: First Settlement to 1951 is divided into three general periods: First Settlement to 1900, Post Pioneer Farming: 1900-1920, and Mid 20th Century Farming: 1920-1951. There is also a section on Aquaculture which is not divided into separate chronological periods. Within these larger periods are sub-areas on Pioneer Farms, the Grange Movement, Cut-over Farms, Specialized Farms, Tree Farms, Berry Growing as well as general information about the periods. The property types associated with the context are Cut-Over Land Farmsteads; Specialized Farming Buildings/Structures; Aquaculture Sites and Structures; Early Settlement Farmsteads and Grange Halls.

Geographic Setting:

Thurston County is located in Western Washington State adjoining the southernmost point of Puget Sound. Topographically, the 735 square mile county is composed of three areas, the Coast Range, the Willamette-Puget Lowland and the Cascade Mountains. The Upper Chehalis River bottomlands in the Rochester and Grand Mound district in south Thurston County are valuable farmlands with a low elevation from 60 to 100 feet above sea level. Along the Black River is another open-plain farming area in the Little Rock vicinity. Extending from the towns of Tenino to Rochester in southern Thurston County, are the remains of the Glacial Drift Plain characterized by clays, sands and gravels as well as kettle holes, moraines and mounds including the Mima Mounds. Near the cities of Olympia, Lacey and Yelm in the northeast part of county, are the glacial till plains which include Chambers, Hawks, Weir, Ruth, Smith and Yelm prairies. Southeastern Thurston County is in the foothill area of the Cascade Mountains, which was historically forested. In this area farming is conducted on cut-over (previously forested) lands.

Because of its glacial geological heritage much of the county is unsuited to agriculture. The best agricultural lands were located in the river valleys and lake areas. The highest quality agricultural is an area of 2,000 acres of rich soils in the Nisqually River Delta area. The Nisqually River rises in the glaciers of Mount Rainier and flows into Puget Sound about three miles north and east of Olympia.

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E. Statement of Historic Contexts (cont'd)

Other good agricultural lands are located along the Deschutes River, at the head of Eld Inlet, and in East Olympia. Thin soils make up half of the lowlands.¹

Historically, the high point of agricultural production in the county occurred in 1940 in which 177,885 acres of farmland was noted in the census that year.

Prehistoric Cultural Occupation:

Salish Indian groups from the tribes now known as Nisqually, Squaxin Island and Chehalis Tribes gathered shellfish and frequented the inlets and prairies of Puget Sound for centuries before Euro-American exploration and settlement. For the tribes, the rivers of the County were long-established sites for salmon harvesting, the prairies of the County were popular hunting and plant harvesting sites, and the beaches were replete with shellfish.

There is evidence Salish people conducted rudimentary agricultural activities by modifying the landscape to facilitate hunter/gatherer activities. According to the Marian Smith "More definite methods were also employed. Berry fields, especially blackberry patches, were burned over, but how, when or by whom this was accomplished could not be discovered."² Another account states that burning was done in early spring or fall for grasses and every three years for berries. By some accounts, the first American settlers continued the burning practices of their Indian predecessors.

The Cowlitz corridor from Olympia to Centralia was documented as a series of prairies by Hudson's Bay travelers including James Douglas and Dr. William Tolmie in the 1830s. Here the camas and foraging grasses for the native people's horses grew in abundance.

The open prairies provided a variety of the foods which were used by the Coastal Salish including bunch grasses, violet, camas, shooting star, sedge, kinnikinnick, mosses, lichens, bracken fern and salal.³

¹ "Thurston County Agriculture", County Agricultural Data Series, 1956, Washington Crop and Livestock Reporting Service Bulletin

² Smith, Marian, The Puyallup-Nisqually, New York, Columbia University Press, 1940, p.273

³ "An Ecological History of Old Prairie Areas in Southwestern Washington, Indians, Fire, and the Land in the Pacific Northwest. Robert Boyd Editor, Oregon State University Press, Corvallis, 1999, pp 153-155.

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E. Statement of Historic Contexts (cont'd)

The Nisqually are descendants of the Southern Coast Salish Tribes who lived in the Nisqually River Basin, nearby prairies and along the beaches of Puget Sound for generations. The Chehalis are descendants of Salish people of the Lower Chehalis River which relied on sea resources, and the Upper Chehalis River, who had a river-based economy. The Squaxin Island tribal members are descendants of the Coastal Salish who frequented the seven inlets of South Puget Sound including Henderson, Budd, Eld and Totten in Thurston County.

The following subsections describe the agricultural practices in Thurston County from the early settlement to the present day. This time frame has been divided into three general periods: 1) First Settlement to 1900, 2) Post Pioneer Farming:1900-1920, and 3) Mid 20th Century Farming: 1920-1951.

Agricultural Periods	Types of Farming
First Settlement to 1900:	Large Scale Hudson's Bay Company Farming American Pioneer Farms (Primarily located on pre-historically burned prairie land or river bottoms) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bush Farm • Olympia Area Early Agriculture • Lacey Area Early Agriculture • South County Early Agriculture Aquaculture
Post-Pioneer Period Farms—1900-1920	Cut-over Farms Specialized Farms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yelm Irrigation Company • Brown Farm in Nisqually • Cloverfields Dairy • State Training School for Girls • Cannery Ranch • Berry Farming Aquaculture
Mid-20 th Century Farming—1920-1951	Tree Farms Diversified Farms Holiday Produce Aquaculture

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E. Statement of Historic Contexts (cont'd)

I. First Settlement to 1900:

European Exploration and Settlement:

The first Euro-Americans to come to Thurston County were part of the British Vancouver Expedition under the command of Captain George Vancouver. Lt. Peter Puget, part of the Vancouver Expedition and Captain George Vancouver explored the southernmost tip of Puget Sound in 1792. They returned to the mother ship "The Discovery" disappointed that they had not found the Northwest Passage. In 1824, another British expedition left Fort Astoria to explore the territory between the Columbia and the Fraser River. James McMillan lead the party up the Chehalis River to the Black River. From there they followed the Indian portage routes through Black Lake to Tumwater and then to Eld Inlet. It wasn't until 1833 that the British Hudson's Bay Company made a permanent settlement at Fort Nisqually, near modern day Northwest Landing near Dupont, Pierce County. The Company had initially considered the area around falls of the Deschutes River in Tumwater as a fort site.

By 1838 the Hudson's Bay Company had decided to add another element to their post at Fort Nisqually. The agricultural arm of the company, the Puget Sound Agricultural Company (PSAC), was created to provision the Company's forts and to sell agricultural goods to the Russian market in Alaska. It was also established to provide wool, hides and tallow for sale in the English market. The PSAC was the first large commercial farming operations in Thurston County outside of the landscape modification done by the Salish peoples.

By 1846 the PSAC controlled about 140 square miles from the mouth of the River up the coast to a point two miles north of the mouth of the Steilicoom River, from there 12 miles northeastward and then southward to the Nisqually River 12 miles from its mouth, and from there downstream to the Sound. On this broad expanse were some 8,000 sheep, 3,000 head of horned cattle, 250-300 horses. These were grouped into small farms managed by herdsmen of the HBC and Indian workers.⁴ Four of these farms were located in what is now Thurston County. These were at Delphi, Hawks Prairie (Tyrell's Lake), Tenalquot and Nisqually in south Thurston County.⁵ The Nisqually farm was described as being on the "right bank of the Coe, or Nisqually River which extended thirty miles east-west and

⁴Gibson, pg. 97.

⁵Crooks, Drew, "From the Orkney Islands to Tenalquot Prairie: The Life of Thomas Linklater, Occurrences, Vol. X. No. III, Fall 1991, pgs. 10-12.

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E. Statement of Historic Contexts (cont'd)

twenty miles north-south."⁶

In addition to the livestock, thousands of pounds of wool and sheepskins were shipped from Puget Sound agricultural lands as well as horns and cowhides by the hundreds. The farms also produced large amounts of produce such as peas, grain and potatoes.⁷ Despite the statistics which show considerable production, the farm at Nisqually had problems with the shallow soil as well as the loss of livestock due to poor husbandry and disease.

Another aspect of farming at Nisqually was an attempt to attract British settlers to come to the area to bolster the British claims to the land north of the Columbia River. Beginning in 1818, the area was subject to a Joint Occupancy agreement between the U.S. and Great Britain but by the early 1840s, it appeared that Americans were making a de facto claim to the area by extensive settlement.

In 1841 a group of colonists were sent from the Hudson's Bay Company Red River Settlement near what is now Winnipeg, Canada to the area just east of the Nisqually River in the delta area. Their families farmed on half shares under the guise of the Puget Sound Agricultural Company. Despite liberal promises from the HBC, the settlers quickly decided that the land in the Willamette Valley of Oregon offered more opportunity in terms of both the fertility of the soil and the ability to own their land outright instead of farming on shares. And by the fall of 1843, all of the families from Winnipeg had abandoned farming on the Pierce County side of the river.⁸ The farming continued however on the east bank of the river conducted by servants (regular members) of the Hudson's Bay Company.

The farm at Tinalquot (Tenalquot) near present day Rainier in central Thurston County was a sheep station of the Puget Sound Agricultural Company, established in 1849. Records indicate that there were some 2,600 head of sheep at the station by June of 1850. The station was managed but Thomas Linklater, an Orkneyman servant of the Company. Upon his retirement in 1851, the Puget Sound Agricultural Company closed its Tinalquot station. However, Linklater remained on the farm and established a donation land claim. He and his wife, an Indian Tsimshian woman from British Columbia, lived on the farm until their deaths, Mary, in 1884 and Thomas in 1890.⁹ The blockhouse, later

⁶ Gibson, James, Farming the Frontier: The Agricultural Opening of the Oregon country, 1786-1846, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985. P.96.

⁷Gibson, pg. 102-103.

⁸Gibson, pgs. 109-118.

⁹ Drew Crooks, "From the Orkney islands to Tenalquot Prairie: The Life of Thomas Linklater," Occurrences, Vol. X, No. III (Fall 1991).

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converted to a granary, was torn down in the 1930s. The graves of Linklater and his wife, survive as does a barn on the property, which dates from the early American settlement period.

Another Hudson's Bay outstation was located at Tyrell's Lake now near, it is believed, Long Lake in central Thurston County. In 1849 and 1850 mention is made in the Company's Journal of Occurrences of raising potatoes and wheat with the help of Indian labor. The Company also logged near the lake.¹⁰

American Settlement

American Lt. Commander Charles Wilkes was the first American to explore the region in 1841. His expedition mapped and named landmarks throughout the region. Members of his expedition lent their names to Henderson, Budd, Totten and Eld Inlets of Puget Sound in Thurston County.

Four years later in 1845, Michael T. Simmons led the first group of permanent American settlers to the falls of the Deschutes River near Budd Inlet in central Thurston County. Simmons settled in the area that would become Tumwater, while other members of the party, including a mulatto, George Bush, settled in the rich prairies to the south. James McAllister and his family, members of the Simmons party, settled in the Nisqually Valley. The decision by this first American party to settle north of the Columbia River was made, in part, because Oregon laws would not have allowed Bush to own land because of his race. The 31 members of the Simmons party laboriously cut a wagon trail that later became the northern branch of the Oregon Trail or the Cowlitz.

By 1846, the boundary between the United States and Canada was settled at the 49th parallel and Thurston County came under American rule. Other Americans quickly followed the Simmons party. Among the new settlers was Edmund Sylvester who settled in Olympia in 1846 and platted the town in 1850.

Early American settlers were quick to settle on the burned-off and natural prairies and in the fertile river bottom lands where they did not have to clear the forested land to begin farming and stock raising. Pioneer John Rogers James noted that "In the fall of 1853 a good many emigrants settled all along the prairies and the valley of Scatter Creek, from the Chehalis River to beyond Scatter Creek and to the Skookumchuck Valley east of what is now Bucoda. The prairies afforded pasturage for their stock and an opportunity to get crops of grain and vegetables growing and cows to milking."¹¹

¹⁰ Crooks, Drew, "The Mystery of Tyrrell's Lake Farm," Lacey Historical Commission Publication, January 1995.

¹¹ Told by the pioneers ... Tales of frontier life as told by those who remember the days of the territory and early statehood of Washington [Olympia?] 1937-38. Reminiscence by John Rogers James, Vol.2, pg. 81.

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E. Statement of Historic Contexts (cont'd)

These first settlers were dependent on the British Fort at Nisqually not only for supplies but also for some agricultural supplies and livestock as well. Although the boundary line was established back in 1846, the Hudson's Bay Company retained their holdings until they had been compensated for their improvements. These claims were settled in 1869-1870.

Land Acquisition

The federal Donation Land Claim Act of 1850 spurred settlement in the area of Thurston County by offering large tracts of free land. The federal land office was for many years in Olympia, which made it easier for claimants in Thurston County to file claims.

The Donation Land Claim Act specifically applied to the Oregon Territory, which at the time included present day Thurston County, Washington. It rewarded the territory's earliest settlers who were already in the area with land. White males, including half-breed Indians, who had settled in the territory by December 1, 1850 could claim up to 640 acres. The law granted 320 acres to single men or 640 acres to married men who were over the age of 18.

The Act also encouraged new settlers to the area by offering, at no cost, up to 320 acres of land to white males who settled in the territory by December 1, 1855. The Act granted 160 acres to single men or 320 acres to married men who were over the age of 21. The act required settlers to live on the land and cultivate it for four consecutive years. Donation land claims were limited to settlers who were U.S. citizens or declared their intent to become citizens. The Donation Land Claim Act continued to apply to the area of present day Thurston County after the Washington Territory was created from Oregon Territory in 1853.

While the Donation Land Claim Act was short-lived, it did very quickly allowed the earliest settlers in the territory to make land claims and eventually acquire title to 300,000 acres of some of the most accessible and fertile land in the state. One major complaint about the act was that the maximum size of a grant, 640 acres, was so large that it isolated settlers from each other and discouraged the development of communities. In Thurston County, 232 Donation Land Claims were filed although several of them encompassed what are now urban areas of the county. Other lands were acquired through the Pre-emption Act of 1841, which allowed settlers to acquire 160 acres of land at the cost of \$1.25 per acre if they had not already acquired 320 acres of land.

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Later the cost rose to \$2.50 per acre on railroad grant lands. Further stimulating settlement was the Homestead Act of 1862 which granted settlers 160 acres of free land for living on and improving the land for five years. This applied to heads of households and single persons over 21. The last significant land acquisition act was the Timber Culture Act of 1873 which granted 160 acres to a settler who planted and maintained a minimum number of trees. Many settlers also purchased lands acquired by others under these provisions.¹²

Notable Pioneer Farms

Early American settlers, drawn by the promise of free land through the Donation Land Claim Act and others began to establish large farms as early as the 1840s and 1850s. The following are some of the earliest known farms in Thurston County.

Tumwater Area Early Agriculture:

Bush Farm:

As one of the earliest American settlers on Puget Sound arriving in 1845, George and Isabella Bush with their family played a vital role in the beginnings of Washington Territory. The son of Quaker parents in Philadelphia, George Bush was a mulatto who traveled widely before making his way west in 1844. He eventually settled in Missouri and married Isabella James there. They became the parents of nine sons [some accounts say 10 or 11 sons], six of whom survived to adulthood.

Feeling the pressures of prejudice in the slavery state of Missouri before the Civil War, Bush and his family joined the westward migration to the Oregon Country in 1844 with their friends and neighbors as part of the Simmons party. Bush had been very successful in the cattle business and came west with excellent supplies as well as a cache of coins said to be worth \$2000.

Bush and his family, with the Simmons party, reached the Dalles on the Columbia River in December 1844 after a seven month journey. Bush remained at the Dalles while the others in the party went on to Washougal on the Columbia River.

¹² Washington State Department of Agriculture, Washington's Centennial Farms, October, 1989.

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E. Statement of Historic Contexts (cont'd)

It wasn't long before George Bush again met prejudice. The Oregon Country was still under a joint occupation agreement between the U.S. and Great Britain with no formal government. However, the Oregon Provisional Government at Oregon City had passed in June, 1844 a law, which excluded Negroes of all conditions from the Oregon area.

Bush and his family, along with the rest of the Simmons Party, were determined to go north to Puget Sound where the exclusion laws were not enforced. They arrived in present day Thurston County in November of 1845. Bush, an accomplished farmer, and his family quickly established a fine farm on the prairies adjoining the Deschutes River near Tumwater.

While other white settlers were entitled to free land under the provisions of the Donation Land Claim Law passed in 1850, it took an act of the U.S. Congress to grant George and Isabella Bush their land because of their color. Fifty-five members of the newly formed Washington Territorial Legislature petitioned Congress to grant them their land. Their claim of 640 acres was approved by Congress in 1879.

The Bush farm became the showpiece of agriculture of Washington Territory. His wife Isabella helped establish one of the area's first gardens with berry bushes and fruit trees. She helped get the first turkey and chicken flocks started from eggs from Fort Nisqually. She also tended a fine flock of sheep for wool.

The Bush sons, William Owen, Joseph Tolbert, Rial Bailey, Henry Sanford, January Jackson and Lewis Nesqually were all helped on the large Bush farm which was enlarged to encompass 800 acres along the fertile prairies of the Deschutes River.

It was William Owen Bush, however, that became one of Washington's most famous farmers. He was born in Missouri in 1832 and after a trip to the California Gold Rush in 1850, he moved to the Mound Prairie south of Tumwater with his wife Mandana Smith Kimsey Bush. After his parents' death, he moved to their Bush Prairie farm and with his wife and brothers organized the Western Washington Industrial Association to promote agricultural exhibits.

Wheat and oats grown on Bush prairie was to become the featured attraction at worldwide exhibitions. In 1876 W. O. Bush won first premium for Best Wheat and Highest Yield of wheat at the Philadelphia World's Fair and his exhibit went to Smithsonian.

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Additionally Bush garnered bronze medals at the World's Fairs of 1893, 1901 and 1904 for produce.

Not only was Bush a successful farmer, he was also elected to the first Washington State Legislature in 1889 as a representative for Thurston County. In 1890, Legislator Bush lobbied for the establishment of a college for the study of the "Science of Agriculture." which later became Washington State University.¹³ A butternut tree planted by George Bush is the only extant remnant of their farmstead. The tree is listed on the Thurston County Register of Historic Places.

Olympia Area Early Agriculture:

Levi Smith Farm:

In downtown Olympia, the first small farm was that of Levi Smith, who with Edmund Sylvester, homesteaded the area. The description of the farm was: "Two acres of land were enclosed, in which corn beans, pumpkins squashes, potatoes, peas, turnips, cabbages, melons cucumbers beets parsnips, carrots onion, tomatoes, radishes, lettuce, parley, sweet fennel, pepper grass, summer-savory, and sunflowers were cultivated. The livestock belonging to this establishment comprised 5 hogs, 3 pigs, 7 hens, a cock, a cat and dog, a yoke of oxen and a pair of horses."¹⁴

Oblates of Mary Immaculate Mission:

Another early small scale farm was at the Mission of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate better known as St. Joseph's of New Market. It was located at the present day site of Priest Point Park. After settling at the site in 1848, the priests eventually cleared more than eight acres of land and planted cabbage, potatoes and vegetables as well as wheat, not only for their own use but for retail sale. In one year they cleared \$150.00 in sales.¹⁵ The first newspaper of the area, noted "Persons skeptical about the richness of the soil immediately upon the sound would have their doubts removed by visiting the garden at the

¹³ Millner, Darrell in The River Remembers : a History of Tumwater, 1845-1995 / [edited by Gayle L. Palmer], Virginia Beach, Va. : Donning Co., c1995. P 41-50.

¹⁴ Bancroft, pg. 16.

¹⁵ Nicandri, David, Olympia's forgotten pioneers : the Oblates of Mary Immaculate , Olympia, Wash. : State Capitol Historical Association, c1976, pg. 8.

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Mission of St. Joseph under charge Rev. Pierre Ricand [sic] where they will find very many species of vegetables growing in the most luxuriant profusion and mammoth size.”¹⁶ The priests abandoned the mission in 1860 and the area eventually became a park. Today no remnants of the mission activities are extant.

Lacey Area Early Agriculture

Chambers Family Farm:

Chambers family who came overland in the mid-1840s and settled on Chambers Prairie in the Lacey area successfully sowed and harvested crops on the wide prairie land. Andrew Chambers noted “We raised plenty of wheat, potatoes, peas and other vegetables.”¹⁷ The Chambers family had come to the region with a large herd of cattle and noted that beef could be fattened in even in February. They reported that one beef could yield 60 pounds of tallow.¹⁸

Andrew Chambers described the barn which was built on his property in 1848. “. . .we built the log barn which stood over half a century . . . this barn had five apartments, two for hay and grain, one for stalls, one for wagons, and one for threshing. It was long, narrow barn, and all under one roof. The clapboards were put on with wrought nails from England. The sheeting was of logs, put on the right distance apart to use four four-foot boards.”¹⁹

McAllister Farm:

One of the original members of the Simmons/Bush party was James McAllister who instead of settling on the prairies south of Tumwater, located in the Nisqually Valley.

¹⁶ The Columbian September 11, 1852 pg. 2

¹⁷ Blankenship, Mrs. George, comp. and ed., Early History of Thurston County, Washington, Olympia, n.p., 1914, pg. 163.

¹⁸ Blankenship, pg. 163.

¹⁹ Chambers, Andrew, “Recollections,” s.l., s.n., pg. 28.

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A reminiscence told of the fecundity of the valley, "After coming to the valley, we were quite prosperous, so fertile was the soil that we raised a third crop of wheat without plowing the land. Vegetables grew to wondrous size, potatoes from eight to ten pounds were not uncommon. Everything that we put in the ground grew. We soon had an orchard, the trees grew from the seed, but they bore fine fruit."²⁰

South County Early Agriculture:

Rutledge Farm:

The Thomas Rutledge Farm near Littlerock along the Black River in South Thurston County is one of the most intact farms from this early period. Thomas Rutledge came over the Oregon Trail to the Littlerock area, then known as Black River, in 1853 where he settled on a pre-emption claim and built a log cabin. Rutledge built the original section of this house in 1861 and added the north wing in 1893. The house had a gravity water system, the first to have running water in the area.

Also on the property is perhaps the finest example of early barns in the county. Still in use, the large barn was built in 1864 by the Rutledge's and is over 125 feet long and 75 feet wide. The barn is constructed of hand-hewn timbers with mortise and tenon-pegged crossbeams. The massive rectangular building is set on a stone and wood pier foundation. The tall gabled hip roof is clad with wood shingles and the walls are clad with vertical board siding. Smaller gables extend from the main gables on the front (east) and rear facades above the tall hinged doors leading to the haymow; flanking smaller doors lead to the stalls. The low north and south walls each have five small four-paned windows which light the stalls.

Rutledge grew meadow hay on the Black River bottom-land and sold it as a cash crop to livery stables and other concerns in Olympia. Rutledge stored the hay in the wide mows of the barn until

²⁰ "Early Reminiscences of a Nisqually Pioneer," in Told by the Pioneers. . . Tales of frontier life as told by those who remember the days of the territory and early statehood of Washington [Olympia?] 1937 -38. Vol 1. Page 168.

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transporting it by horse and wagon to Olympia throughout the winter. The house and barn have been in the Rutledge family since their construction. The Rutledge farmstead property is listed on the Thurston County Register of Historic Places and has been determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Colvin Farm:

Ignatius Colvin, a native of Boone County, Missouri, first came west as a driver of an U.S. Government commissary wagon destined for Fort Vancouver. He then crossed the Columbia River and worked making shingles. He later made his way northward to Tumwater and then to the Grand Mound area in 1854 where he took up a donation land claim on Scatter Creek. There he built a home a quarter mile from the present house.

Colvin acquired almost 3,000 acres in the vicinity of the house, which is actually on the William Martin Donation Claim. Colvin also owned considerable land in adjoining Lewis County. In the 1860s Colvin and his son cleared 480 acres in the Upper Hanaford Valley, leading the way, according to one source, to "the prosperity of the valley for farming."

Colvin raised cattle and other livestock on the original mounded prairie. Settlers used to burn every third year varying among Rochester, Tenino and Yelm, following the practice of the Native Americans to keep larger vegetation from encroaching on the grasslands. Extant features on the property include the 1870s era house and 1914 era barn and other outbuildings. The Colvin family continues to live on the property and raise cattle on the native mounded prairie as well as raise meadow hay. The property is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Plumb/Spirlock/Nelson Farm:

William Plumb, an early settler who was a delegate to the Monticello Convention called to facilitate the creation of a new territory north of the Columbia River separate from Oregon, established a large farm on Rocky Prairie between Tumwater and Tenino. Plumb, a Justice of the Peace, raised hay, grain, dairy and beef on his property. Plumb's descendants continue to own and operate the farm which extends to over 1000 acres along the Deschutes River. Extant on the farm are the 1904 era house, and two barns from that era as well as a granary and other outbuildings. They are set amid prairie land and a grove of garry oaks.

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James Family Farm:

One of the best documented family farms of the early settlement period in Thurston County is the James Family Farm. They came over the Oregon Trail in 1851 and settled on the Grand Mound Prairie in southern Thurston County. They owned 320 acres of burned off prairie.

In letters to their family in Wisconsin in 1852, Isabella James noted agricultural prices of the period: 60 to 70 cents per pound for butter; from \$50 to \$100 a head for cattle; from \$5 to \$8 each for sheep, and, chickens were \$.65 to \$1.00 each. She noted that eggs could be sold for 50 cents a dozen and wheat from \$3.00 a bushel. In her letter, Mrs. James also mentioned the use of extensive Indian labor. A photograph from 1872 shows the James family in a potato field with some of their Indian workers. The James family also sent for orchard goods from their native Cornwall, England.

John Rogers James, son of Samuel and Maria James, recalled that by the early 1850s, "Our sheep had done well and we soon had four or five hundred head. When we wanted mutton we killed a fat wether, shearing, washing and selling the wool. Often we would take a fat mutton to Olympia to market and the Government officials would declare it was the best mutton they had ever tasted. The prairie bunch grass was very nutritious and certainly did produce good beef and mutton."²¹ The first American wool shipment from Washington was 15,000 pounds from Puget Sound in 1860 which brought 12 to 16 cents per pound.²²

In 1860, Samuel James wrote an extensive letter to a newspaper in Cornwall, England about the conditions in Thurston County. In it, he described the agricultural conditions of the county including the harvesting of grain.

"The grain is all harvested by the scythe, and one man harvests (that is, cuts, binds, and shocks) one English statute acre for a day's work, and in some places this will yield 65 imperial bushels of wheat. It is bound in large sheaves (generally called binoles) about 300 to an acre, and is never needed to be put into mows in the field; after standing in shocks a few days it is hauled into the barn, which is made large enough to hold all the crop. It is threshed and winnowed generally at once, by machines which travel through the country, or else it is tramped out by horses or oxen. Grain thus threshed and cleaned costs about one-fifth of the crop to pay for it.

²¹ James, Told by the Pioneers, P. 85.

²² Bancroft, Hubert Howe, History of Washington, Idaho and Montana, 1845-1889. San Francisco, The History Company, Publisher, 1890, pg. 350.

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Our fanning mills (winnowing machines) are of the very best description, so that three hands will clean up and put into the bin, from 100 to 150 bushels of wheat in a day.”²³

The James Family Granary dating from 1884, is still extant and is listed on the Washington State and Thurston County Historic Registers.

II. Post-Pioneer Period Farms—1900-1920

Early 20th Century Farms and Farming

From the early settlement period until the turn of the 20th century, Thurston County’s population grew rapidly as the timber industry grew. Sawmill towns on Puget Sound in Grays Harbor and inland created important markets for farm products enabling farmers to specialize in farm and animal produce.²⁴

Railroad service first came to Thurston County when the Northern Pacific mainline reached Tenino in southern Thurston County in 1873. By the early 20th century, railroads had brought more people to Thurston County as well as creating transportation links and spurring the growth of towns such as Tenino and Bucoda in South Thurston County. Along the branch line of the Northern Pacific, small towns and trading centers such as Little Rock, Rochester and Grand Mound grew up. Many immigrants came to work in the forest industries and created small farms on logged off land where they grew berries, raised cattle, had small dairies and chicken farms.

In 1907 a promotional booklet noted that the county farmers were engaged in diversified farming including wheat growing for stock feed yielding about 30 bushels per acre. The booklet also states that oats, barley, buckwheat, rye, beets carrots, parsnips, rutabaga, ma, potatoes, and other vegetables were grown in the county. Other farmers grew berries, including cherries, strawberries, and others fruits. Dairy farming was also highlighted in the publication, as were prune growing and drying as farming options.²⁵

²³ James, David, From Grand Mound to Scatter Creek-- : the homes of Jamestown Olympia, Wash. : State Capitol Historical Association of Washington, c1980, p. 37.

²⁴ Thurston County Agriculture, pg. 3.

²⁵ The Olympia Chamber of Commerce, “The Farm In Its Relation to Olympia and Thurston County, Wash., Bulletin No. 3”, Olympia, Washington, 1913. Pp.1-23.

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By the turn of the 20th century there were 665 farms in the Thurston County totaling more than 128,822 acres with the average size of 194 acres per farm.²⁶

Cut-over Farms:

Despite the average size of farms in 1900, a significant number of farms were “stump” or “cutover” type operations. The dense forests of first growth timber in Thurston County were logged from earliest settlement through the late 1930s. This created thousands of acres of stump land particularly in the west, southwest, east and southeast county areas. The loggers, who were often of Scandinavian descent, would not only work in the woods but often established small farms with a house and barn on these logged-off lands. Their wives and children often ran the farm while the husband worked in the woods and were an integral part of the economic unit.

Slowly, the land was cleared, often at only an acre a year through use of a “Swede hoe”, which was an axe-like tool, with a wider and heavier head that could be used like a hoe. Another method of clearing the land was by slowly burning the stumps much as Indian people had done by building a fire and capping it with clay to create an oven. Other settlers used dynamite to dislodge the stumps. After clearing the stumps, underbrush, often fast-growing blackberries remained. These farms rarely exceeded 20 acres at first. “Most farms were small, about 20 acres, but they provided some of life’s necessities including milk, meat, eggs, vegetables, but very little cash.”²⁷

If the farm could be enlarged to 30 to 40 acres, more cows could be accommodated with their calves. The butter and cream could then be sold for cash while the milk was used on the farm for family use or to feed animals. Almost all of the farms had chickens and sold eggs. Neighbors sometimes joined together for harvest. Potatoes were a favorite crop which was sometimes communally harvested. In Independence Valley, a community threshing machine was used for the grain crop.

²⁶ Agricultural Census Data.

²⁷ Gardebring, Olov G., “The Swedes and Swede-Finns of the Independence Valley (Rochester), Washington Area,” in The Swedish-American Historical Quarterly, Vol. XLIX, No. 1, January 1998 pp. 5-42.

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After World War II, these small farms languished because of mechanization and rising costs. Early settlers saw their families, often a vital workforce, grow up and move away, unwilling to continue the subsistence farming.²⁸

Hilma Englund and Anna Ditch described the typical Scandinavian farm in the Independence Valley of southwest Washington before World War II in their book, "A Little History of Independence Washington." They noted that oats, peas, wheat, vetch, hay and potatoes were the main crops raised. Every farm had a few cows, pigs, and chickens. Potatoes were a primary crop. Grain was cut with horse drawn binders and threshed by steam powered threshing machines. Not until 1940 was the first combine used to harvest grain. Calves and hogs were slaughtered by individual farmers and sold via the railroad. Hogs were fattened on peas and were sometimes pastured on the crop.

Eggs were traded for groceries before the 1920s and 1930s when larger poultry and egg farms came into production. Trucks from nearby towns picked up eggs and brought feed to the poultry farmers.

In 1921, a milk-marketing cooperative called "Darigold" was begun in the area. Farmers bought shares in the creamery at \$10.00 per cow milked. Milk was shipped in cans to nearby Chehalis in Lewis County for processing. Later, Darigold required dairies to have modern milking parlors and coolers to market milk. As a result many of these structures were built on county farms during this era. The cooperative proved successful and merged with a larger organization in the mid-1960s. It has since been discontinued.²⁹

Granges:

The grange movement began just after the Civil War as a fraternal organization for farmers. The grange offers social, educational and community improvement programs but also is active in legislative lobbying activities on issues related to farming. Grange members have also formed buying and marketing cooperatives. The first grange in Thurston County was organized at Brighton Park near Tumwater in 1905. By 1908, three other granges were organized in the county--Chambers Prairie on Chambers Prairie near Tumwater; Valentine at Gull Harbor in north Thurston County, and Pleasant Glade near Lacey.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ditch, Anna and Hilma Englund, "A Little History of Independence Valley, Washington," State Capitol Museum, Olympia, 1976. Pp 29-32.

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The Pomona or coordinating grange was established in 1908 in downtown Olympia with 30 charter members. It continued to hold meetings in Olympia at various halls for a number of years. By 1939 there were granges at Brighton Park, Chambers Prairie, Deschutes, Spurgeon Creek, South Bay, Prosperity, McLane, Skookumchuck, Michigan Hill, Rochester, South Union, Black Lake, Nisqually, Littlerock, and Violet Prairie. They were established near the principle agricultural areas of the county. There are several grange halls still existing in the county although not all of them are still used for that purpose. They include Nisqually Grange, Violet Prairie Grange, Skookumchuck Grange, Littlerock Grange, Black Lake Grange, Deschutes Grange, Spurgeon Creek Grange, South Union Grange, South Bay Grange, Prosperity Grange, Brighton Park Grange, and Chambers Prairie Grange. There are ten active granges in the county.³⁰

Specialized farming:

In the early part of the 20th century, various specialized or intensive farming operations utilized scientific principles to increase production or make the connection between production, processing and marketing more efficient. In part, these farms were created to take advantage of improving transportation systems.

Yelm Irrigation Company:

Conceived in 1910 by L.N. Rice, James Mosman and Tom Chambers, the Yelm Irrigation Company sought to bring water from the Nisqually River to thousands of acres in Yelm area. L.N. Rice and Company of Seattle engineered the project which was in large measure built by the residents themselves with lumber provided by the Salsich Lumber Company of McKenna beginning in 1912. Each property owner was to build a part of the ditch proportionate to his acreage in the project. The job proved to be a difficult one and later a steam shovel was purchased to do the work. A number of problems including flow, lining and unstable flumes confronted the group. Undaunted, the Yelm Irrigation Company officially opened the ditch in June, 1916 and for a number of years held an annual picnic to celebrate that day.

³⁰ Information from Washington State Grange Website and Historical Records.

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Water was carried through eleven and a quarter miles of ditch and flume in an effort which involved moving 250,000 cubic yards of dirt. Realtors capitalized on the project offering land at \$50 per acre with a low down payment and interest. In the project, which covered about 5,000 acres of Yelm prairie land, growers produced raspberries, blackcaps, strawberries and blue lake string beans. Fruits and beans were sold the Olympia Canning Company which had established a cannery on the Olympia waterfront in 1912. Berries became a community symbol and events such as picnics and a "Berry Pickers Ball", sponsored by the Yelm Community Club quickly became a part of Yelm community life.

The flumes, posts, caps and stringers were made of cedar cut from trees along the right of way of the canal. One of the few irrigation districts to be formed in Western Washington, the Yelm District was definitely a community effort and source of pride. The project began to experience failure however in 1930 when the flumes began to leak badly and the water delivery became sporadic. The irrigation company hired people to walk the flumes and repair them and at least one pump was installed. The Depression years coincided with the difficulties and the canal system limped along before being closed in 1950, finally terminating in bankruptcy in 1954. Today there remain only a few siphons and flumes from the project along the roadways of southern Thurston County and in a park in the City of Yelm.³¹

The Brown Farm in Nisqually:

In 1872-5 George Shannon who worked for the Northern Pacific Railway Company acquired about 1,100 acres of the George W. Shaser Donation Land Claim on the Nisqually River Delta in the northeast part of the county. He began to dike the land which is now part of the Nisqually Wildlife Refuge. By one account Shannon brought 150 acres under cultivation of hops, hay and grain, while the rest of the ranch was stocked with cattle and horses.

³¹ Hooper, Dean and Roberta Longmire, Yelm Pioneers and Followers, 1850-1950, Yelm Historical Society, Yelm, Washington, 1995, pp. 109-121. Prescott, Edgar, Early Yelm, Folly Press, 1979. Loutzenhiser, Richard and Floss, The Story of Yelm 1848-1948, n.p., 1948. Yelm Irrigation Company Records at Washington State Archives. Prescott, Edgar, "At Long Last, Yelm Gets Its Ditch", Sunday Olympian, Totem Tidings Magazine, 10/15/78 "Yelm's Irrigation System Had Drawbacks", Sunday Olympian, Totem Tidings Magazine, 10/22/78

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Diking on the west-side of the river began in earnest after the purchase of the property by Alson L. Brown and his wife Emma. In 1904, Brown, a Seattle attorney purchased the Shaser land and additional acreage on the delta including 850 acres on the McAllister Creek hillside and 1500 acres on the delta. Brown built a four-mile, U-shaped, earthen dike with the eastern border on the bank of the Nisqually River and on the west, McAllister Creek. Puget Sound was the northern boundary. One-way gates let fresh water pass through the delta into the Sound. Initially the work was done with a horse and scoop but in 1910 a dredge was brought in to reinforce the dike and fill in the remaining sloughs. After three years the soil became viable for farming.

Brown set about building a huge model agricultural enterprise that not only included farming and stock raising but also a marketing and processing operation. The farm supported a huge crew. Lodgings for single men and cottages for married men were built. There was even a small general store on the premises. The dairy had 300 milking cows and a creamery to process the products. There was a chicken operation for 20,000 birds a year for meat and 4,000 laying hens. The farm produced 2,000 hogs per year which were processed on-site. The Brown farm also processed products from adjacent farms. Charles Rough who came to the farm in 1914 and worked as foreman there noted:

“All this required an array of buildings and equipment: seven private homes, a "hotel" sleeping 50 and feeding up to 80, an office, store, supply room, horse implement shed, heavy equipment building, repair shop, well and water tower, refrigerating plant, steam plant, root storage, granary and grinder place, bee- building, carriage-horse barn, work-horse barn with hay mow, silo, milk-barn with hay-barn, calf and young stock barn, bull-quarters, hog pens, hog-feed cooker, . . . incubator house, brooder house, growing houses, laying houses, fattening and dressing quarters, creamery, packing house, shipping room, a box mill, and all the equipment to go with the above.”³²

³² Rough, Charles quoted in Larson, Lynn L. and Jerry V. Jermann, “A Cultural Resources Assessment of the Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge,” Office of Public Archaeology, Institute for Environmental Studies, University of Washington, Reconnaissance Report No.21, Seattle, June, 1978.

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Rough also recalled that the acreage of the Brown farm was: "divided into some forty areas of all kinds of sizes and shapes and purposes. The farmstead was on the slightly higher portion near the open end of the horseshoe of the Nisqually River side. . . the fields provided barley, and oats, and rye and hay, and corn-silage, and kale, and rape and roots, and potatoes, and fruit and vegetables."³³

The Brown Farm was short-lived, however. Brown suffered financial reversals during World War I and the farm went into bankruptcy. An auction was held in 1924. The new owners were P. B. Truax, C. D. Clinton, and Robert Olden who continued to operate the farm. They raised the dike in 1924-25 using a crane to dredge the inner ditch. They also built the large Jamesway barns in 1932 which are still extant and known as the "Twin Barns." Today they are the only existing elements of the large scale farm. Other elements were razed in the 1970s when the farm was purchased as a National Wildlife Refuge.

Cloverfields Dairy:

Hazard Stevens, son of the first Territorial Governor, Isaac Stevens, came to the Washington Territory in 1854 as a young man of 13. Hazard accompanied his father in parleys with the Indians and participated in the Puget Sound Indian War of 1855-56. He later served in the Civil War receiving the Medal of Honor for his gallantry in several battles. Hazard Stevens was one of the youngest men ever to be brevetted Brigadier General.

After the Civil War, General Stevens returned to the Northwest to contribute in many capacities to its development. After a time in the east, Stevens again returned to Washington in 1914. He set about developing a large tract of land south of the town of Olympia. Stevens cleared the heavily forested land, originally part of a land grant purchased by his father, in 1853. On it he created a model dairy farm and called it "Cloverfields." As the president of the Olympia Light and Power Company, he promoted the use of electricity in an electrified barn and milking machines. His 73 Holstein cows were an unknown breed to the local residents and General Stevens had to assure them that the milk was as good as that from the more familiar Jerseys.

³³ Rough, quoted in Larson and Jerman, 1978.

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General Stevens constructed a large (50 feet by 100 feet by 70 feet) gambrel-roof barn and two tile silos, as well as a number of outbuildings. The farmstead also included a large Colonial Revival home built in 1914. Holsteins grazed on the lush clover and angora goats kept the lawns closely cropped. General Stevens had also laid out an extensive orchard of fruit trees. After General Steven's death in 1918, the farm passed on to his sister Kate Stevens Bates who, with her husband, operated the farm until it was divided into housing parcels in the 1930s and 1940s. The Olympia High School is located on the dairy portion of the property. The house is the only extant building from the farm and it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.³⁴

State Training School for Girls:

In 1913 the legislature authorized the establishment of a separate State Training School for Girls to serve wayward and incorrigible girls. The legislature funded the building of cottages and later an administration building near Grand Mound in South Thurston County, a short distance from Chehalis, site of the State boys' institution.

The establishment of the school was done under the direction of a committee chaired by Miss Janet Moore, a prominent educator, suffragist and clubwoman from Olympia. She worked with four other women and two men. Records show that the establishment of the school was supported statewide by women's groups. All of the employees of the school were women. The first Superintendent was Mary Campbell. The school offered not only an educational regimen, but also a virtual course in farming and animal husbandry on a farm of over 200 acres. The girls milked cows, provided for bees, and harvested crops from squash to berries. They raised and slaughtered livestock and canned produce. The biennial reports from the Superintendent to the legislature recorded that coupled with this vigorous program of physical labor was a succession of psychological and behavioral theories to affect changes in the girls. The Administration Building is the only structure remaining from the initial institution, which was renamed "Maple Lane" in 1951.

³⁴Stevenson, Shanna, Olympiana, State Capitol Museum, Olympia 1982, pp. 56-59.

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The school was changed to a male juvenile institution in 1978 and girls were transferred to another facility. The other original cottages were torn down in the 1950s. The Administration Building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.³⁵

Cannery Ranch:

The National Canning Company was begun in about 1912 in Olympia. Mark Ewald was general manager with W. P. McCaffray, George S. Pelton, John E. Pelton and E. S. McCord as the other officers.

The firm located on a dredged port fill at Thurston and Columbia Streets in Olympia, was housed in a large wooden building. They started by packing fish, fruits and rhubarb but expanded their line to include gooseberries, cherries, raspberries, loganberries, blackberries, huckleberries, pears, apples plums, prunes, rhubarb, pumpkins and beans.

The cannery eventually was owned partly by West Coast Grocery of Tacoma but stayed under local management. In 1916 a new concrete structure west of Capitol Way was built when the firm changed its name to "Olympia Canning Company." As many as 1500 workers, most of whom were women, worked during the height of the canning season which extended from May through February

During its early years, most of cannery's production went to England. Under their slogan, "Canners of Northwest Fruits," the firm later packed for several labels, including S & W and shipped to premium grocers throughout the U.S. and Europe. Produce came from Eastern Washington and the company's own ranch near Gull Harbor. Berries were brought from Yelm, Rochester and surrounding farms as well. The fruit also came via boat from Vashon, Fox and Harstene Islands on Puget Sound. The cannery sold bulk vinegar, frozen berries, and at one time canned 95% of the Washington pear crop, some 12,000 -16,000 tons per year. A large building built in the late 1920s east of Capitol Way was used to ripen pears shipped from Eastern Washington. None of the cannery buildings are extant.

³⁵ Cochran, Hon. W.H., Washington's State Institutions, n.p., n.d. 87 pages.
Excerpts from the Biennial Reports of the Board of Control for the State of Washington
Newell, Gordon, "The State's Got Us Now," Perspective, Fall 1969, Vol. 13. No. 2.
Papers of governor Ernest Lister, Washington State Archives.

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The firm also owned the "Sunnybay Plantation" at Gull Harbor which began in 1919 and operated into the 1940s. The farm encompassed about 300 acres where pie cherries, Italian prunes, strawberries, raspberries and loganberries were grown. Fruit was hauled daily to the cannery via truck and a steamboat, the Logan, from a nearby dock. At peak berry time, 200 girls came to work at the farmsite. The ranch grew experimental types of crops such as black, pink and white strawberries. Other novel crops were thornless youngberries and boysenberries. Ivan Moorhouse was the general manager of the ranch and cannery. Other cannery ranch workers, many of whom were farmers of German and Russian descent from Eastern Washington formed a community in the area and built a church nearby, which is still in existence.

By the 1940s, the ranch, whose lands were depleted by berry growing, grew turkeys specializing in white and bronze varieties of the birds and still later black angus cattle were raised there. Two houses associated with the cannery ranch are still extant but no other buildings associated with the operation still stand.³⁶

Berry Farming:

The cultivation of berries was very popular just after the turn of the century not only in the Yelm area of southeast Thurston County but also in the Rochester–Grand Mound area of south Thurston County. In 1907 a fruit grower's association was organized to promote berry cultivation. That year growers received \$2.00 per crate of strawberries with an average of 400 crates per acre with returns of \$100 to \$500 per acre.³⁷

At Grand Mound in the 1920s and 1930s, local growers established the Grand Mound Fruit Growers Co-operative, which had a packing plant in the area. That building is no longer extant. They raised Marshall strawberries and shipped them in barrels made at the plant.³⁸

³⁶ Interview with Ed Shincke, whose father was farm superintendent.

Interview with Merton Hill, employee of the ranch and cannery.

Conner, Theresa, "Haying fever hits old ranch balers", "Olympian", July 17, 1985, "Neighbors" p. 1

³⁷ Bureau of Statistics, Agriculture and Immigration, "A Review of the Resources and Industries of Washington, 1907," "Olympia, Public Printer, 1907, p. 209..

³⁸ James, From Grand Mound to Scatter Creek, pg. 101.

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The South Bay area also had several strawberry farms including one owned by Alvin Huber who operated "Olympia Strawberry Farm" on Draham Road for over 39 years starting in 1902. The operation included picking, sorting, grading and processing berries with a sugar pack into 30-pound containers. Other growers had smaller plots in the district ranged from one-half acre to five acres.³⁹

Census Data:

The following table gives information from the federal Agricultural Census on the numbers, extent and average size of farms in Thurston County. It is known by Donation Land Claim and GLO map data, that by the mid-1850s, a considerable amount of land in Thurston County was already under cultivation. The trend toward small, cut-over farms which were at the high point right before World War II is evident in the statistics. After World War II, these farms became much less attractive and land was consolidated by the more successful farmers. The decline of small fruit and berry farms and the failure of the Yelm irrigation project are also reflected in the decline after the 1940s. A number of "hobby farms" increased as state employment increased after the mid-1950s as the historic trend of small scale farms with the owners earning their primary income by working outside of agriculture.

³⁹ Goff, Susan, interviewer, "Conversation with Alvin Huber," October, 1985.

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E. Statement of Historic Contexts (cont'd)

THURSTON COUNTY AGRICULTURAL CENSUS DATA

Census Year	Total Farms in County	Total County Area in Farms	Average Size of farms in County
1890	350	108,808	311
1900	665	128,822	194
1910	1,173	151,243	130
1920	1,490	140,040	94
1930	2,069	142,479	69
1940	2,876	177,885	69
1945	2,848	154,835	54
1950	2,022	170,640	84
1954	1,766	157,202	89
1959	1,220	142,170	116.5
1964	1,193	129,895	108.9
1969	660	81,478	123
1974	529	65,211	123
1978	618	63,610	103
1982	857	67,768	79
1987	806	56,799	70
1992	811	59,890	74
1997	832	56,300	68

Early 20th Century Farms:

Despite these specialized farms, a booklet by the Olympia Chamber of Commerce in 1913, gives a snapshot of the typical farm, "The average farmer has a herd of 10 to 20 cows. He keeps hogs and chickens. Perhaps he is feeding a bunch of steers or a small flock of sheep or goats. Grazing on a large scale is not generally followed. There are a few breeders of fine stock and the average is good." The booklet also mentions that logged-over agriculture lands cost about \$20 per acre and clearing costs are \$40 to \$100 per acre."⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Chamber of Commerce of Olympia, "The Farm, In Its Relation to Olympia and Thurston County," Washington, Bulletin No. 3, 1913.

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A Bureau of Statistics and Immigration publication from 1920 states that in that year, there were 140,040 acres of farmland with 1,490 farms which a value of \$11,793,337 in the county. The average size of the farm was 94 acres with about one-third of the land improved. The county generated \$1,467,051 in products that year. The primary industries were dairying, poultry, berries, fruit and stock raising. There were 4,642 milk cows and a similar number of stock cattle. About 250,000 bushels of potatoes were produced. With other crops of oats, vetch, wheat and barley used as livestock feed. Fruit trees numbered close to 40,000. That year the county ranked first in shellfish production in the state.⁴¹

III. Mid-20th Century Farming—1920-1951

After the turn of the century, as farms became more established, farmers turned to diversification of their crops to meet changing market and population demands. During the period, the number of farms increased from 1,490 farms with 142,479 acres in cultivation to over 2,000 farms with 170,640 acres in cultivation. The average size of the farms grew from 69 to 84 acres.

Tree Farms

With the exhaustion of harvestable timber in the Black Hills of western Thurston County in the 1930's and with the accompanying tax defaults, 10,987 acres of land became the property of the State of Washington. Then Department of Forestry heads Mike Webster and O. B. Wedekind saw the Black Hills as a potential reforestation site in what was to become the Capitol Forest. Not only was the time right to reclaim forest lands, but the manpower to do so was available through the Civilian Conservation Corps. Eventually the Capitol Forest grew to include 100,000 acres of land.

Development of a nursery began in 1934 near Cedar Creek in the Capitol Forest. Land was cleared and fenced and buildings constructed by CCC crewmen. During 1936 the first crop of 1.25 million Douglas fir seedlings were planted by the CCC. The facility was a pioneering effort in nurseries

⁴¹ Bureau of Statistics and Immigration, "Washington Descriptive and Statistical Information for the Traveler, Homebuilder and Investor, Olympia, Frank Tamborn, Public Printer, 1922, pg. 121

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E. Statement of Historic Contexts (cont'd)

and featured an overhead sprinkling system, a power seed extraction plant and cone drying operation heated with a hot water system. CCC labor came from unit P-208 at Elma and a side camp of 25 enrollees at the nursery. The Program was an experimental project to determine the relationship between natural and artificial stocking and also resulted in the development of new technology to grow and harvest seedlings. In the Capitol Forest the CCC's harvested 4622 bushels of forest tree cones to restock forest lands, contributed 25,344 man days of labor in the nursery and planted much of the 15,624 acres of state-owned forest land. In 1952 the Cedar Creek Youth Camp housed in the barracks began forest operations as part of the correctional program. The center is now used for adult inmates who are finishing their sentences. Several of the buildings associated with this first experiment in growing trees for reforestation are extant. The successor to the State Cedar Creek tree-growing operation is Webster Tree Farm in Thurston County which produces 13.5 million fir, pine and noble fir seedlings annually. In addition there are several other tree nurseries in the county, both public and private.⁴²

Diversified Farming:

An article celebrating the state's 50th anniversary in 1939 gave an idea of the county's farming for that period:

"Yelm, about 20 miles to the southeast of Olympia, is a rich dairy and agricultural area, its irrigated area being famous for the yield and quality of beans, berry and truck garden crops; Rochester, in the southwestern corner of the county, lies in the center of an excellent strawberry area . . . There are 1,995 dairy farms in Thurston county taking care of 10,266 cows. The average annual butterfat per cow is from 225 to 240 pounds. This county has 200 commercial poultry farms containing 168,232 birds. With 596 berry farms in the county, there is an acreage of 1,496 acres in strawberries, while 865 additional acres are in red and black raspberries and other cane berries. In 1935 the total value of farm and orchard products of the county was \$1,155,380.00, with all hay leading at \$303,640.00. Livestock and poultry on farms had a total value of \$1,344,910.00, cattle, of course, leading with \$946,841.00. Livestock products, including milk and cream

⁴² Annual Reports, Division of Forestry, T.S. Goodyear Supervisor of Forestry, 1934-36, 1936-38. Felt, Margaret Elley, Capitol Forest: The Forest That Came Back, Department of Natural Resources, 1975.

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E. Statement of Historic Contexts (cont'd)

reached a total of \$1,038,844.00, these two items alone touching three-quarters of a million dollars. The total value of poultry products was \$631,540, chicken eggs produced being of the value of over \$450,000.00 in 1,803,958 dozen.”⁴³

By 1940 the number of farms reached a high point for the 20th century with 2,876 farms encompassing 157,202 acres. In the post World War II period, many left farms for industrial or government employment.

A newspaper article from 1950 by then County extension Agent Robert W. McKay gives an idea of the farming of the post-war period. There were 2,800 full and part-time farmers cultivating 154,835 acres. The poultry industry was expanding as well as horticultural crops. He noted that in 1950, Thurston County was the blueberry center of the State and West Coast. Specialty farms included rhubarb, flowers, bulbs, and lavender and filberts. Another up and coming industry was Christmas trees. However the traditional dairy and poultry continued to be the highest in income production.⁴⁴ McKay continued his narrative in 1953 adding that tree farming and woodlots were important resources for farmers.⁴⁵

By the mid-1950s farms were smaller in part because of the increased costs for cut-over lands and the subdivisions of large homesteads. Half of the farms were in low-intensity farming woodland pasture or woodland. Thurston County led the state in three specialty crops: lavender, mushrooms and strawberry plant stock.⁴⁶ The Ostrom Mushroom Company (Green Giant Company in the 1930's) established in 1928 near what is now Lacey accounted for the mushroom statistic and today continues to be a major crop in the region.⁴⁷

⁴³ “Thurston County Offers Opportunities,” The Olympia News, Golden Jubilee Edition, November 9, 1939, no page number.

⁴⁴ Robert W. McKay, “Diversified Farming is Boon to Olympia,” The Daily Olympian, Monday, May 1, 1950, pg.B4

⁴⁵ Robert W. McKay, “Abundance of Water in County Accounts for Many Fine Crops,” The Daily Olympian May 27, 1953, pg. 7A.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Information from Bill Street, Ostrom Mushroom Company President.

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E. Statement of Historic Contexts (cont'd)

Holiday Produce Production

By mid-century, holiday produce such as holly and Christmas trees started production. The Holly Hills Farm in north Thurston County was established in 1928 by chiropractor Dr. A. B. Fitschin. Fitschin began holly planting in 1932 and harvested holly as the "Red Berry Holly Farm" in plain and variegated varieties. Fitschin also had filbert trees on the property. There were also holly farms on Cooper Point by the 1930s.⁴⁸

Thurston County was for many years largest producer of plantation-grown Christmas trees in Washington. Long-time Thurston County Cooperative Extension Agent, Bob McKay, encouraged the growing of Christmas trees. The J. Hofert Company near Tumwater had thousands of acres in production. Many smaller plots were also developed.⁴⁹

Aquaculture:

The Inlets of Puget Sound in Thurston County have the optimum conditions for shellfish in the salinity of the water, the amounts of diatoms-plankton in the water, the current flow and water temperature.

Native Americans gathered shellfish in the inlets for hundred of years before Euro-American settlers began to commercially harvest oysters and clams. The Olympia oyster, *ostrea lurida*, a small oyster known for its delicate taste flourished in these waters. As a result, Oysters were shipped from Thurston County as early as the 1850s. During the territorial period, persons were allowed the use of 20 acres of land for oysters. One of the earliest organized oyster growers in the county was Olympia Oyster Company, organized in 1878 by S. C. Woodruff, Nathaniel Crosby, T. C. Van Epps, A. B. Cowles, S. K. Taylor and others. David Helser that same year established a harvesting operation on oyster beds on Oyster Bay or Totten Inlet. As early as the 1880s, native Olympia oysters, *ostrea lurida*, were already being depleted and the Olympia Oyster Co. began to re-seeded the lands of Oyster Bay.

⁴⁸ Information from Mr. & Mrs. Bill Kasper, 1985.

⁴⁹ Information from Don Tapio, 2001.

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After Washington statehood in 1889, oyster land was offered for sale to those who had cultivated it for oystering. Many American Indians as well as others acquired land. Many non-Indians married Indian women to gain title to the lands. Early tidelands owners included Olympia Jim, Mary Olympia Jim, Joe Gale, and Sandy Wohaut.

Later the tidelands could be purchased by anyone, whether or not they had already cultivated the land. And several companies were organized to cultivate and harvest oysters on both bays. These were the Olympia Oyster Company, Simmons Oyster Company, and Brenner Oysters.

Several laws governed the shellfish industry after statehood in 1889. The 1895 Bush Act allowed citizens to obtain shellfish grounds at a low cost provided that the land was used for oyster culture. The State retained the right to cancel the land ownership. The cancellation privilege was later revoked by the Callow Act. Other laws followed which regulated cultivation of shellfish and ownership of tidelands.

By the 1890s oyster growing firms in Thurston County were using the French method of diking and filling oyster lands to maintain a constant water depth over the shellfish. A layer of gravel was placed on the mud flats and then dikes were built to surround the grounds. The dikes were first made of wood and later concrete.

By 1909, by one account, there were 100 acres of oyster land on Mud Bay and 420 on Oyster Bay and 340 on Henderson Inlet. In 1908 alone, 810,726 pounds of opened oysters and 1,602,745 pounds of oysters in the shell were shipped from Olympia.⁵⁰

Families, often Japanese, lived in "culling houses" on the bays and harvested and sorted the oysters which were then transferred by small boats to opening houses on the Olympia waterfront. Later the opening houses moved out to the bays.

⁵⁰ "Thurston County Oyster Industry," in *The Coast*, 1909 (reprinted in 1976) pg. 154.

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F. Associated Property Types

(Provide description, significance, and registration requirements.)

During the 1920s, sulfite poisoning from mills on Oakland Bay and adverse weather conditions decimated the oysters. By some accounts, it was the Japanese oyster drill that caused the decline. After the pulp mills ceased operation, production of oysters returned to Eld and Totten Inlets although the pacific oyster was introduced to the bays for most of the production.

Today private growers continue to grow Olympia oysters, pacific oysters, European flat oysters, manila clams and geoducks in Totten and Eld Inlet. The Nisqually and Squaxin Island Tribes also cultivate shellfish.⁵¹

These property types were selected because they illustrate the major themes and time periods of Thurston County Agricultural History described in the context statement. These property types are typical of the extant resources associated with these themes and periods. There are existing properties which can to registered under these property types. The associated property types have been divided into five groups: 1) Cut-over lands, 2) Specialized Farming Buildings/Structures, 3) Aquaculture Sites and Structures, 4) Early Settlement Farmsteads, and 5) Grange Halls. The period of significance dates from first Euro-American Settlement in the 1840s to 1951. The geographic limits are the current geographic limits of present day Thurston County.

Some important farmsteads and other resources which relate these property types have previously been placed on the National Register under the MPD, "Historic Resources of Unincorporated Thurston County," which was developed in 1987.

⁵¹ Steele, E. N., The rise and decline of the Olympia oyster, by E. N. Steele for the Olympia Oyster Growers Association Elma, Wash., Fulco Publications, 1957.

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Cut-Over Land Farmsteads

Description

Eligible properties are farmsteads associated with the agricultural activities conducted on “cut-over” or previously forested land on which timber had been harvested. These lands were slowly cleared of the stumps and underbrush related to first growth timber to create open cropland which was used for pasture as well as grass and feed grain production. The farms illustrate the slow development of a farm and farmstead as land was cleared and larger herds of cattle, often dairies, or flocks of chickens were managed. The farmsteads often have structures built or replaced over an extensive period of time as farming technology and economic conditions changed. Because of this changing type of agriculture, some buildings may have been altered to accommodate the emphasis of agricultural activities over a long period of time. The farms are associated with the context of Thurston County Agricultural history documented in the MPD, “Agriculture in Thurston County, First Settlement to 1951.” They are located in all parts of the county and represent a variety of periods and architectural styles. The determination of whether or not they are located on previously forested lands would be based upon historical research, examination of historic maps and/or GLO information.

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F. Associated Property Types (cont'd)

Significance

Because much of Thurston County was heavily forested historically, much of the prime agricultural land was already settled by the late 19th century. Many families, especially of Scandinavian descent settled in the county. The man of the family often worked in the logging or lumber processing industry, and with his family, he slowly established a farm on relatively inexpensive lands. These farms often offered supplementary income through the sale of milk, berries, beef or eggs. They also often provided subsistence for their residents including fruit, garden produce, milk, eggs, and larger potato crops. These properties are significant under Criterion A because they are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of Thurston County History. They may also be significant under Criterion C as examples of vernacular homes and outbuildings representing ethnic heritage.

Registration Requirements

PHYSICAL

Eligible properties encompass the range of styles and methods of construction of the mid-19th to the mid-20th century. These could include barns, chicken houses, milk houses and granaries. There should be a sense of a farmyard or enclosed area to illustrate the relationship of the activities to the house and land. The farmstead should have a primarily intact house, barn and significant other outbuildings associated with animal and crop agriculture. Eligible properties should have good integrity of form including windows, porches, architectural elements and siding on the house and outbuildings. Metal roofs, a common alteration, are acceptable. Other alterations to exterior historic features should be minimal or should be more than 50 years old.

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F. Associated Property Types (cont'd)

ASSOCIATIVE

Eligible properties are at least 50 years old and are associated with the development of cut-over land forest land to productive farmland over an extended period of time. These sites reflect the themes expressed in the MPD, "Agriculture in Thurston County, First Settlement to 1951"

Properties of this property type already listed on the National Register under the MPD "Historic Resources of Unincorporated Thurston County" include:

The Jaaska House and Warehouse (listed 6/24/88)

Specialized Farming Buildings/Structures

Description

Eligible properties are buildings that served as part of the specialized farming operations which located in the county, primarily after the turn of the century. They are not typical of the small scale cut-over farms but offer additional facilities to serve specialized or large farms which concentrated on dairy or hay production. They may or may not be part of a larger farmstead. They may be the only extant feature of a historic farmstead or operation. These include houses, administrative buildings, water towers, barns, granaries, chicken coops, milk houses, tree-cultivation buildings, and irrigation syphons or flumes.

Significance

These properties are significant under criterion A because they are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of agricultural history in Thurston County and reflect the specialized farming practices of the period during which they were built.

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F. Associated Property Types (cont'd)

Registration Requirements

PHYSICAL

Eligible properties are at least 50 years old and exhibit good integrity of the windows, porches and overall form. Exterior changes to the buildings should be minimal. These buildings/structures may or may not have their associated houses or outbuildings that were originally part of the farmstead and as such can be eligible as stand alone structures. They may be in urban areas or remote areas of the county.

ASSOCIATIVE

Eligible properties are associated with agriculture and have documented significance when evaluated in the context of reflecting the themes expressed in the MPD, "Agriculture in Thurston County, First Settlement to 1951."

Properties of this property type already listed on the National Register include:

Cloverfields (listed 5/22/78)
State Training School for Girls, MPD, "Historic Resources of Unincorporated Thurston County," (listed 6/23/88)

Aquaculture Sites and Structures

Description

Eligible sites and buildings include culling houses, diked tidelands, and opening houses which are associated with the aquaculture industry in the county. They may not entirely reflect their original appearance but may have been altered to reflect the changing technologies associated with this industry.

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F. Associated Property Types (cont'd)

Significance

These properties are significant under Criterion A because they are associated with events in the history of aqua culture, a part of the agricultural history of Thurston County in the county

Registration Requirements

PHYSICAL

Properties should be on or near original locations. They may have alterations made to accommodate changing technological needs of the industry. Eligible properties are associated with agriculture and have documented significance when evaluated in the context of reflect the themes expressed in the MPD, "Agriculture in Thurston County, First Settlement to 1951"

Early Settlement Farmsteads

Description

These farmsteads include those dating from the 1850s to 1900 and reflect the settlement patterns of the earliest Donation Land Claims along the river bottoms and valleys and open prairies of the county.

Significance

These properties are significant under Criterion A because they are associated with significant events in the history of agriculture in Thurston County.

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F. Associated Property Types (cont'd)

Registration Requirements

PHYSICAL

Properties should have the components of an early farmstead including a house, barn and associated outbuildings. These farmsteads should include a house which was original to the property or constructed to replace the initial house, often in the late 19th or early 20th century. They also should have barns or outbuildings original to or a replacement of the initial barns or outbuildings as well as spring houses, corrals, or other associated elements. They often have original landscaping such as trees planted when the homestead was established. They are often close to rivers or streams which offered easily available water supplies. They should have minimal alterations. They often have replacement metal roofs on the house or outbuildings which are acceptable.

Eligible properties are associated with agriculture and early settlement of the county and have documented significance when evaluated in the context of reflect the themes expressed in the MPD, "Agriculture in Thurston County, First Settlement to 1951."

Properties of this property type already listed on the National Register or determined eligible under the MPD, "Historic Resources of Unincorporated Thurston County," are:

- Thomas Rutledge Farm (determined eligible)
- L. N. Rice House Farm (listed 9/23/88)
- Colvin Farm (listed 6/23/88)
- Mills-Brewer Farm (listed 6/23/88)

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F. Associated Property Types (cont'd)

Grange Halls

Description

The grange halls are structures built or used for an extended period of time as grange halls. They may have previously or subsequently been used for other purposes, such as schools. They are usually simple wooden structures located along main roads and they may have stages or other grange-related interior elements. They are most often elongated rectangular structures, sometimes with Craftsman details such as wide eaves and exposed rafter ends. They date from the early 20th century to the 1930s.

Significance

These properties are significant under Criterion A because they are associated with significant events in the history of agriculture in Thurston County.

Registration Requirements

PHYSICAL

Properties should be relatively unaltered including intact windows, siding and entries. They may have replacement metal roofs. They may have original interior spaces such as stages and vestibules. They should retain a significant part of their original setting.

Eligible properties are associated with agriculture and early settlement of the county and have documented significance when evaluated in the context of reflect the themes expressed in the MPD, "Agriculture in Thurston County, First Settlement to 1951.

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G. Geographic Data

The Multiple Property Documentation extends throughout the present geographic boundaries of Thurston County.

H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

(Discuss the methods used in developing the public property listing.)

The "Thurston County Agriculture History, First Settlement to 1951" Multiple Property Documentation is based upon a comprehensive survey of the urban and rural areas of Thurston County by Shanna Stevenson and Tom Costantini and subsequent historical research by Shanna Stevenson. The property types referenced in this document were identified as a result of that work.

The historic context and property type statements were based on a review of survey data and relevant literature. The development of this context required re-evaluation of survey data to identify significant properties associated with the agricultural theme, some of which had already been registered. Additional archival research was done on these properties.

The typology of property types was based on the associative qualities of the properties in the context of the agricultural history of Thurston County in the context time period.

The context statement is designed to provide an evaluation framework for agricultural history in Thurston County. It is based, in addition to the review of survey data, on a review of published and unpublished sources relevant to agricultural history in Thurston County.

The standards of integrity for listing of representative properties were based on the National Register standards and the knowledge of the condition of existing properties. Information from research literature and survey information was used to arrive at specific standards of integrity. National Register Bulletin 16B was consulted in the development of the document.

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I. Major Bibliographical References (cont'd)

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