



DESTINATION FOCUS

AAA Washington Travel Services

Greater Olympia

OLYMPIA (pop. 44,460; urban area 238,000; alt. 130 ft.) has served as Washington's seat of government since the territory was created in 1853. The city enjoys a dramatic setting on the wooded shores of Budd Inlet, the southernmost reach of Puget Sound. The site is naturally forested and dotted with lakes. Mt. Rainier's snowy dome commands the eastern horizon, while the craggy profile of the Olympic Mountains lies to the northwest. The Greater Olympia area embraces the adjacent cities of Lacey and Tumwater and extends throughout Thurston County.

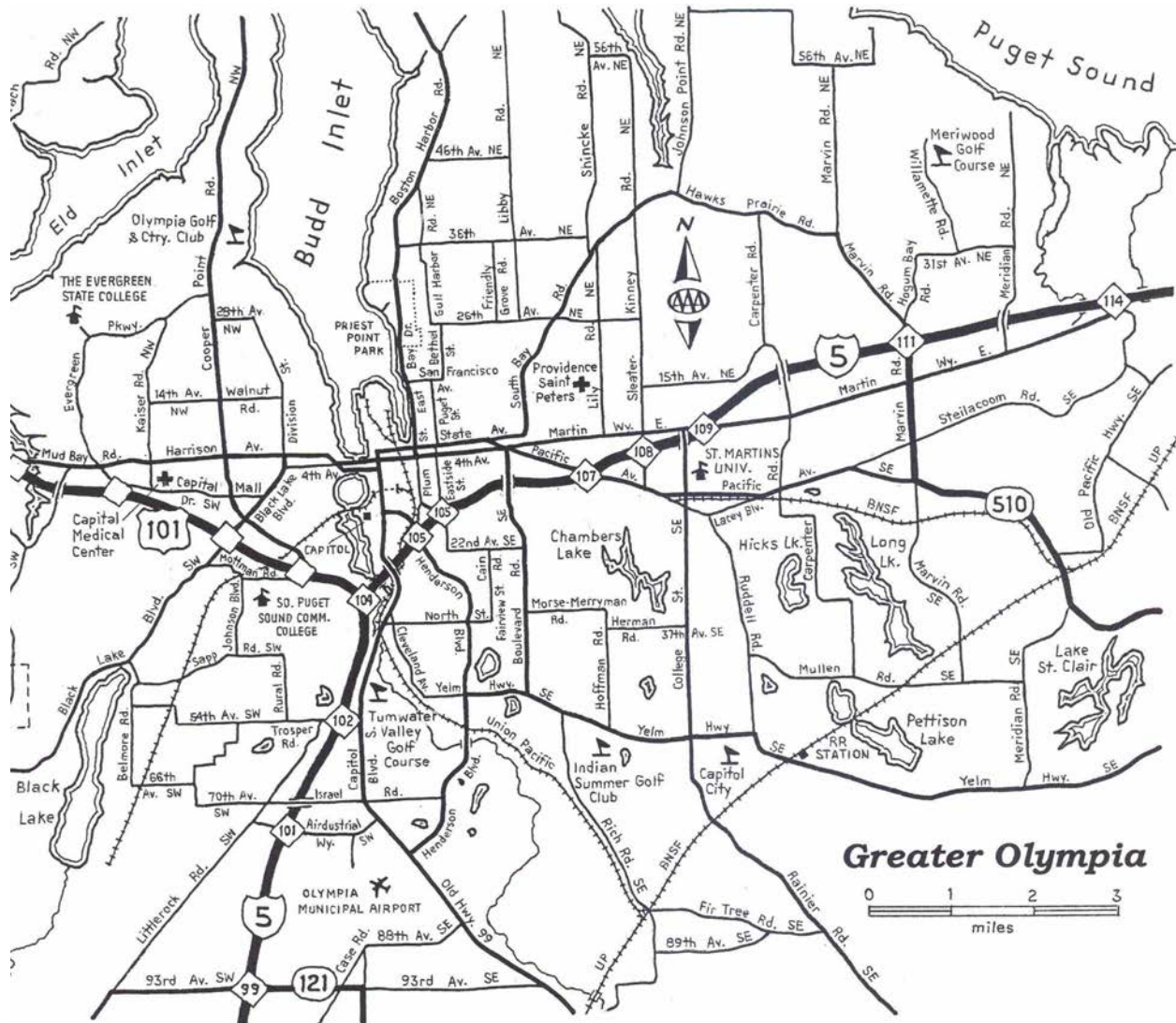
European settlement started in the mid-1840s. The site was known as Smithfield, named for pioneer homesteader Levi Smith. The California gold rush of the late 1840s siphoned off much of the small population, but a few returned, hoping to establish a town. In 1850 Isaac Ebey suggested the name Olympia for the nascent settlement (he found it in *Life of Olympia*, and thought it more suitable for the enterprise). By 1851 the hamlet had a U.S. customs house. Settlers began to clear the land. Father Pascal Ricard established an Oblate mission at Priest Point and built several buildings on the north side of town to house railroad survey crews and the new territorial governor. In 1853 Congress designated tiny Olympia capital of the new Washington Territory. The first Legislature met in February, 1854, in the upper room of a frame building (a sidewalk plaque at 222 N. Capitol Way marks the site). Pioneer settler Edmund Sylvester donated land for the capitol and a town square. This site became the center of town – Sylvester Park.

By the late 1850s, Olympia was a cluster of nearly 60 frame buildings and log cabins scattered across the stump-dotted flats beside Budd Inlet. Samuel Percival built a dock and soon boats connected the town with Steilacoom and other ports on the shores of Puget Sound. Olympia incorporated as a municipality in 1859. Its early growth was slow. In the early 1870s Olympia lobbied to be the terminus of the northern transcontinental railroad, but lost out to Tacoma. The main line of the Northern Pacific bypassed the capital to the east – the nearest station was at Tenino, 15 miles distant. A narrow gauge line linked the capital to the main line in 1878.

During its first half-century of existence Olympia successfully fought off bids by rival towns wanting to serve as Washington's capital. Centralia, Ellensburg, North Yakima, Seattle and Vancouver courted the territorial government. In 1861 the Legislature passed a bill designating Vancouver as capital, but courts ruled it unconstitutional because of wording flaws and failure to specify a date for the move. Ellensburg nearly pulled it off in 1889, the year the territory became a state. The young city boasted a central location and, with the arrival of the transcontinental railroad in 1886, a booming population. Confident of its future role, the local newspaper was *The Capital* and money was set aside to start construction on government buildings. North Yakima entered the contest late, however, and split the vote. Although the combined Ellensburg-North Yakima portion was larger than the number voting for

Olympia, the latter won handily in the runoff plebiscite. The State Legislature officially designated Olympia as capital in 1890.

State government remains the major employer, although health care, education and retail are increasingly important. The city is also a seaport. Contemporary Olympia has evolved into an important urban center offering the visitor numerous things to see and do.



THE INFORMED TRAVELER

WHOM TO CONTACT

Emergency: 911

Police (non-emergency): (360) 753-8300

Weather: <http://wa.weather-forecast.ws/olympia>

Hospitals: Capital Medical Center, 3900 Capital Mall Dr. SW, phone (360) 754-5858; Providence St. Peter Hospital, 413 Lilly Rd. NE. phone (360) 491-9480

MEDIA

Newspapers: The capital city's daily *The Olympian*, is published mornings – <http://www.theolympian.com/home/>

Radio: AM stations include KGY, adult contemporary, news (1240 khz); KUOW (1340 khz), National Public

Radio. FM stations include KAOS-FM, alternative, eclectic (89.3); KXXO-FM, adult contemporary (96.1); KGY-FM, country (96.9 mhz); KFMV-FM, classic hits (97.7 mhz); KAYO-FM, country (99.3 mhz).

Television: Olympia receives broadcast television stations from Tacoma and Seattle

Visitor information:

Olympia / Thurston County Visitor & Convention Bureau: 809 Legion Way SE, Olympia WA 98501. Phone (360) 704-7544 or (877) 704-7500.

TRANSPORTATION

Approaches By Car

Interstate 5, the major north-south route on the West Coast, passes through Olympia, Lacey and Tumwater. Tacoma and Seattle are 30 and 60 miles north, respectively. Portland lies 114 miles south on I-5. **US-101** branches west from I-5 exit 104 near the Olympia-Tumwater boundary. The scenic highway loops north around the Olympic Peninsula, then swings south, following the Pacific coast into Oregon and California. **State Route 8** branches west from US-101 six miles west of the city, continuing to US-12 and the Grays Harbor area. Aberdeen lies 50 miles west and the beach resort city of Ocean Shores is another 24 miles beyond. **State Route 510** heads east from I-5 exit 111 in Lacey. This leads to Yelm and Mt. Rainier National Park (via SR-507, 702, 7 and 706. The park's Nisqually Entrance, leading to Longmire and Paradise, is 62 miles from the capital city.

By Air

Olympia Municipal Airport is 2 miles south of I-5 exit 102 via Capitol Blvd. The airport serves general aviation. There is currently no scheduled air service to Olympia. Shuttle services between Seattle-Tacoma International Airport and the Greater Olympia area are offered by **Capital Aeroporter**, phone (360) 754-7113 or (800) 962-3579; and **Centralia/Sea-Tac Airport Express**, phone (800) 773-9490.

By Rail

Centennial Station is located on Yelm Hwy. SE in Lacey, seven miles southeast of downtown Olympia. **Amtrak Cascades** trains serve the Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor south to Portland, Salem and Eugene, and north to Tacoma, Seattle, Bellingham and Vancouver, BC. The Seattle-Los Angeles *Coast Starlight* also stops here. Local transit and taxicabs link the station to the urban area.

Rental Cars

Hertz has two locations in Greater Olympia: Olympia Auto Mall, 220 Carriage St. SW, phone (360) 786-5665; and Pearson Aviation (at Olympia Municipal Airport), 7529 Capitol Blvd. S., phone (360) 352-0171.

Public Transportation

Intercity Transit serves the Greater Olympia and Thurston County area with a fleet of buses. Phone (360) 786-1881; Web site: <http://www.intercitytransit.com/>

Taxis

Taxi service is available from **Capital City Taxi**, phone (360) 357-4949; **DC Cab**, phone (360) 786-5226 and **Red Cap Taxi**, phone (360) 357-3700.

Shopping areas

The central business district has an eclectic mix of shops, boutiques and galleries in the blocks radiating out from Sylvester Park. The **Olympia Farmer's Market** (described below) is the second largest in the state, after Seattle's Pike Place Market. **Westfield Shoppingtown Capital** (locally known as **Capital Mall**) features nearly 100 stores, including anchors retailers J.C. Penney, Macy's, Mervyn's and Best Buy. The mall is located on the west side of the city, north of the Black Lake Blvd. exit off US-101. **South Sound Center**, off I-5 exit 108 on Sleater-Kinney Rd, has Kohl's, Sears and Target.

Climate

The Greater Olympia area has a Marine West Coast climate. Rain falls in every month, but summers are drier. The following table presents average monthly temperatures and precipitation.

OLYMPIA MUNICIPAL AIRPORT (elev. 190 ft.)

Averages	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual
Max. Temp. (°F)	44.5	49.2	53.4	59.0	65.7	71.0	77.1	77.1	71.6	60.6	50.5	44.8	60.4
Min. Temp. (°F)	31.6	32.4	33.8	36.5	41.5	46.6	49.4	49.5	45.2	39.6	35.5	32.8	39.5
Precip. (inches)	7.95	5.82	5.12	3.35	1.98	1.57	0.72	1.20	2.04	4.74	8.10	8.18	50.76
Snow (inches)	7.3	3.7	1.9	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.3	3.9	18.1

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

Centerpiece of the setting is the **CAPITOL CAMPUS**, located on a hill just south of downtown (to reach the campus head west from I-5 exit 105). Its 55 landscaped acres house the capitol and other state government buildings. Your first stop should be the **Visitor Center**, Capitol Way and Sid Snyder Avenue (14th Avenue). Its friendly staff provides information on tours and public access to state buildings. Free parking (30-minute limit) is available at the center. There is also metered street parking and parking in garages (fee). The visitor center is open Mon-Fri 8-5, Sat-Sun 10-4, Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day; weekdays 8-5, rest of year. For information phone (360) 586-3460.

A stroll around the campus reveals imposing monuments such as the striking Winged Victory (a World War I memorial), Tivoli Fountain and memorials to World War II, the Vietnam War and the Korean War. A 71-foot Story Pole totem, dedicated in 1940, stands nearby. In spring Japanese cherry trees and massive banks of rhododendron add color to the campus. From the north side of the campus, adjacent to the Greenhouse, a fine view extends across the city to Budd Inlet and the distant Olympic Mountains.



Washington's Legislative Building

Legislative Building (State Capitol), commands the highest point on the hill and dominates the city skyline. The capitol houses the governor's office and legislative chambers for the State House of Representatives and State Senate. Public galleries overlook the two chambers. Completed in 1928, the capitol's 287-foot masonry dome is one of the largest in the world. A 25-foot long chandelier, the last major piece designed by Comfort Tiffany, hangs in the rotunda. Lavish marble and bronze appointments grace the interior.

Following the 2001 Nisqually Earthquake, the capitol underwent a major seismic retrofit, completed in late 2004. Free guided 45-minute tours are scheduled daily on the hour, 10-3. The cafeteria in the basement offers tasty, affordable fare weekdays. The building is open Mon-Fri 8-5 (and for tours on weekends). Phone (360) 586-3460.

The **Temple of Justice**, just north of the Capitol, houses the State Supreme Court and Law Library. Sandstone columns line its portico. The interior is lavishly decorated with marble. A brochure describing a self-guided tour is available at the Visitor Center. Open Mon-Fri, 8-5. Phone (360) 586-8687.

The Georgian-style **Governor's Mansion**, just west of the Capitol, is the oldest building on the campus (1908). The mansion is furnished in fine antiques and is set amidst gardens. The mansion is open for morning and afternoon tours most Wednesdays. The **Capitol Conservatory**, on the north side of the campus, is another popular site. The greenhouse features more than 500 varieties of tropical, subtropical and desert plants and seasonal flower displays. The conservatory grows flowers for state occasions. It's open weekdays 8am-4pm.

South of the campus, at Columbia and 21st, the **STATE CAPITAL MUSEUM**, housed in a 1920s California mission-style mansion, displays historic photographs and documents. Its grounds include an herb garden and an ethno-botanical garden. Open Tues.-Fri. 10-4, Sat. noon-4. Admission.

Downtown Olympia, a half-mile north of the capitol, is an interesting mix of new and old buildings. **SYLVESTER PARK**, on Capitol Way between 7th and Legion, is the city's central square, complete with bandstand. On its eastern flank is the **OLD STATE CAPITOL**, built in 1892 in the Romanesque revival style. It first served as Thurston's county courthouse. From 1901-1926 it hosted the state government, while the present capitol was slowly built, and presently houses offices of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Its hallways feature historical photographs and other displays. Open weekdays 8am-5pm.

In the block just north is the **WASHINGTON CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS**, hosting local and touring entertainers and events. It was built in 1985 on the site of the Olympic Theatre. Another old movie palace, the restored **CAPITOL THEATRE** (206 5th Ave. SE) screens classic films and is another venue for live performances.

Four blocks west is **CAPITOL LAKE PARK**, offering a wide range of recreation and the location of *Capitol Lakefair*, a community festival held in early July. The lake's fringe of Japanese cherry trees flowers in April. The **Fifth Avenue Bridge** spanning the lake's outlet, offers a vantage point for watching migrating salmon from August into October.



Boats crowd the capital city's harbor

PERCIVAL LANDING, at the northwest corner of downtown (State Ave. and Water St.) is a waterfront boardwalk. Each Labor Day weekend the landing hosts *Harbor Days*, celebrating Olympia's maritime traditions, featuring tugboat races. Climb the observation tower at the north end of the boardwalk for good view.

At the north end of Capitol Way is **OLYMPIA FARMER'S MARKET**, second largest in the state. The market is a great spot for fresh produce, flowers and crafts. It's open Thurs.-Sun., 10am-3pm, from April through October.

The **JAPANESE GARDEN**, on the eastern edge of downtown (Plum St. north of Union Ave.) commemorates Olympia's sister city relationship with Yashiro, Japan. This respite from the urban pace features paths, a waterfall, pond, bamboo grove and stone lanterns donated by the citizens of Yashiro.

BIGELOW HOUSE (918 Glass Ave. NE) was built in 1854 by Daniel Bigelow, an influential pioneer during Washington's territorial period. The 1854 carpenter gothic home, one of the oldest in the state, features period furnishings and is open Sunday afternoons Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day weekend or by appointment. Admission. Phone (360) 753-1215 or (360) 357-6099.

The campus of **THE EVERGREEN STATE COLLEGE** is on the far west side of town. Founded in 1971 in the aftermath of the student movement of the 1960s, Evergreen enjoys a national reputation for progressive, interdisciplinary education. *The Simpsons* creator Matt Groening is a former student. The campus features contemporary architecture in a forest setting. Enrollment is about 4,000.

NEARBY SUBURBS

LACEY (pop. 35,870, alt. 190 ft.), forms the eastern side of the urban area. Pioneer Isaac Woods settled here in 1852 and the community came to be called Woodland. To avoid confusion with a like-named town in Cowlitz County, which had precedence, the name was changed to honor O.C. Lacey, a local realtor and major property owner. By the 1890s Lacey had a sawmill, resort hotel and a racetrack. In 1895 Benedictine monks established **St. Martin's University** here. Tudor buildings grace its tree-studded campus. Saint Martin's became a four-year, accredited, baccalaureate-granting institution in 1940. The college became coeducational in 1965 and attained university status in 2005. Lacey became an incorporated city in 1966.

Lacey hosts the **Thurston County Fair**, the first full weekend in August. The fairgrounds are at 3054 Carpenter Rd. SE. The first fair took place in 1871. For information call (360) 786-5453.

Visitor information: Lacey Thurston County Chamber of Commerce, 4705C Lacey Boulevard, Lacey, WA 98503; phone (360) 491-4141.

CHEHALIS WESTERN TRAIL is a recreation trail following the route of a logging railroad that operated from 1926 to the mid-1980s. The 14-mile south segment connects 14th Avenue SE at Chambers Lake with SR-507, 2 miles west of Rainier. At its southern end the trail connects with a 14½-mile trail linking Yelm and Tenino. The unpaved 5.2-mile northern segment connects Martin Way and Lindsley Lane SE with Puget Sound at Woodard Bay.

LACEY MUSEUM, 829½ Lacey St., features historical photographs and displays on local history. The building was first a home, later a fire station, a police station and city hall. Open Thurs.-Sat., 10am-4pm. Donations. Phone (360) 438-0209.

NISQUALLY NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE is just north of I-5 exit 114. The refuge preserves forest, grassland and tidal and freshwater marsh habitat for a wide variety of wildlife. Birdwatching is excellent. Field glasses will greatly enhance your visit. The Twin Barns Environmental Education Center has interpretive displays. Hiking itineraries include the ½-mile Nisqually River Trail through a unique riparian tidal woodland. The longest trail is 5 miles. The mouth of the Nisqually River is one of the largest pristine estuaries in the state.

TOLMIE STATE PARK, is 5 miles north of I-5 exit 111. The 105-acre park features Nisqually Beach, a 1,800-foot strand on Puget Sound. The underwater park, created by sinking three wooden barges to provide a reef habitat, is popular with scuba divers. Tolmie also offers picnic sites and nature trails through woods and a salt marsh. Parking fee. The park is open 8am to dusk; closed Mondays and Tuesdays October through March.

WOODLAWN (PIONEER) CEMETERY, Ruddell and Mullen roads, contains graves dating back to the 1850s.

TUMWATER (pop. 13,340, alt. 220 ft.) is part of the Olympia metropolitan area, adjoining the capital city on the south. A northern branch of the fabled Oregon Trail led pioneers, the first settlers in the South Sound area, to this site in 1845, making Tumwater the first American settlement north of the Columbia River (Vancouver is older but was settled by British). Native Americans called the site *spa-kwatl*, meaning “strong water.” French voyageurs labeled it *Deschutes*, meaning “falls.” Hudson’s Bay Company officials designated it Puget Sound Falls and in 1845 it was named New Market. Later it was changed to Tumwater, a Chinook jargon word meaning “rough water” or “waterfall.”

TUMWATER FALLS PARK, which parallels the Deschutes River. The rapids provided power for the town’s early industries, forming the nucleus of the settlement. A gristmill was established here in 1846, attracting the first homesteaders. The former **Olympia-Miller Brewery**, which dominates the east bank, was founded by Leopold Schmidt in 1896. The original brewery, a six-story brick structure, is still standing. The brewery closed in mid-2003. A nature trail parallels the river. From mid-September into mid-October look for Chinook salmon migrating upstream to spawn. Fish ladders help the fish “climb” the falls.

TUMWATER HISTORICAL PARK, at the point where the Deschutes River empties into Capitol Lake, preserves several historic homes. The stately **Leopold Schmidt House** was built in 1906 for the pioneer brewer. **Henderson House** (1905) features vintage photographs and items from Tumwater’s first post office (1863); hours vary; admission charged. Phone (360) 754-4163. Captain Nathaniel Crosby III, who traveled by ship around Cape Horn to the Oregon Country in 1847, built **Crosby House** in 1858, the city’s oldest standing building. Capt. Crosby was singer Bing Crosby’s grandfather. The house has historical displays; open limited hours, phone (360) 943-9884.

OLYMPIC FLIGHT MUSEUM is at the Olympia Municipal Airport, 2 miles south if I-5 exit 102 via Capitol Blvd. This active flying museum features a collection of 22 vintage military aircraft; 16 are airworthy and 6 are static. Each June the museum hosts the “Gathering of Warbirds” air show. Open Tues.-Sun. 10am to 5pm. Admission. Phone (360) 705-3925.

IN THE VICINITY

BOSTON HARBOR (pop. 350, alt. 35 ft.), 8 miles north of Olympia via East Bay Drive and Boston Harbor Road, is a residential community that grew up around a recreational port at the northern entrance to Budd Inlet. Local developers promoted the site as a prime industrial port in the early 1900s. **Doffelmyer Point Light**, on the west side of town, guides shipping into Budd Inlet. Erected in 1936, it replaced an earlier aid to navigation first illuminated in 1887.

RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Boating

- **Boston Harbor Marina**, 312 73rd Avenue NE, rents canoes, kayaks, rowboats, pedal boats, sailboats and motorboats. Kayak tours are offered for groups of 6 or more. Marina open daily. Phone (360) 357-5670.

LITTLEROCK (pop. 850, alt. 150 ft.) is a rural community 3 miles west of I-5 exit 95. Its name is supposedly derived from a rock formation perfect for mounting horses.

MIMA MOUNDS, a mile northwest via Waddell Creek Road, is a Department of Natural Resources reserve protecting a tract of prairie dotted with evenly-spaced hills approximately seven feet high. An interpretive center relates various theories that have been advanced to explain the curious topographic feature. A nature rail loops through the reserve. April through June bring nice displays of wildflowers.

CAPITOL STATE FOREST covers the Black Hills, the hilly western edge of Thurston County. Logging started here in the 1880s, centered on the lumber camp community of Bordeaux, which boasted a population of 300 to 500 in the 1920s-30s. Bordeaux closed in 1941. From 1938 to 1942 the Civilian Conservation Corps reseeded the area, which had been decimated by fires and sixty years of logging. Capitol Forest opened to public recreation in 1955, offering 166 miles of trails for hiking, horseback riding and mountain biking. Sections are designated for ATV and motorcycle use. From Waddell Creek Road a signed dirt road leads to the 2,658-foot summit of Capitol Peak for a panoramic view. Parts of the forest are closed in winter to minimize erosion.

McLane Creek Nature Trail, southwest of US-101 via Black Lake Blvd. and Delphi Rd., is a 1.1 hiking trail through a wooded valley passing several beaver ponds. Interpretive panels explain the changing environment.

ROCHESTER (pop. 1,829, alt. 149 ft.) is near the Chehalis River in the southwest corner of Thurston County on US-12, five miles west of I-5 exit 8. A pioneer Russian settler called the community Moscow. The first post office (1890) carried the name Key; it was changed to its present name in 1904 to honor an eponymous city in England. Rochester became an important trading and lumbering center in the early 1900s, with three sawmills. **Swede Hall** (built 1939), just south of the business district, recalls early Scandinavian settlers.

FORT HENNES, now just a historical marker, is 1¼-mile east of US-12 via 183rd Ave. SW, then ¼ mi. south on Sargent Road SW. A U.S. Army post was built on Grand Mound Prairie in 1855 to protect pioneer settlers from perceived threats from Native Americans. An interpretive panel describes the fort, which once housed more than 200 people. Chimney remains can still be seen and there's a pioneer cemetery across Sargent Road.

CASINOS

- **Lucky Eagle Casino**, 3 miles west on US-12, then .8-mile south on Anderson Road, offers games of chance. The casino, operated by the Chehalis Tribe, features an entertainment center and hotel. For information: www.luckyeagle.com.

TENINO (pop. 1,520, alt. 290 ft.) is 17 miles south of Olympia on Old Highway 99; take exit 102 from southbound I-5. Settlement began as a railroad construction camp in the early 1872. The town stands on an ancient Indian trail and its name, a Chinook jargon term meaning "fork" or "junction," first appeared on maps prepared in 1855 when the trail was upgraded to a military road. Sandstone quarrying started in the 1890s and by 1910 there were five quarries operating. Tenino Sandstone is seen on buildings across Washington, including the Old State Capitol in Olympia. A number of local structures, including the former Northern Pacific Depot and a residence at 189 Wichman Street, are built of the local formation. The quarries gradually closed as concrete became a more popular building material.

TENINO DEPOT MUSEUM is at 399 W. Park Street. The 1914 depot, built of local sandstone, houses displays of local history. One of the more unusual exhibits features wooden money, issued by a Tenino bank during the Great Depression. Open weekends mid-April to mid-October.

WOLF HAVEN INTERNATIONAL, 3 miles north on Old Highway 99, then east on Offutt Lake Road, is an 80-acre sanctuary for the endangered wolf. Guided tours describe the species' natural role in the environment. Visitors can also participate in scheduled "howl-ins" with wolves. Open daily except Tuesdays. Admission (extra fee for "howl-ins"). Phone (800) 448-9653 / Web site - <http://www.wolfhaven.org/>.

YELM (pop. 4,845, alt. 340 ft.) is 13 miles southeast of I-5 exit 111 via SR-510. An extension of Fort Lewis physically separates fast-growing Yelm from the Olympia urban area. The massive snowy dome of Mount Rainier, only 40 miles distant, dominates the eastern horizon. The town's name derives from *chelm*, a Salish Indian word meaning "heat waves from the sun." When the Northern Pacific Railroad built its mainline through here in the early 1870s it modified the name to its present spelling. Initially a trading center for area farmers and loggers, Yelm is increasingly a bedroom community.

CASINOS

- **Red Wind Casino** is 6 miles west on SR-510. The casino, operated by the Nisqually Tribe, offers games of chance and is open daily from 9am to 5am. Web site <http://www.redwindcasino.net/>.

jpk – 15 August, 2007