

CITY OF STAYTON

INVENTORY OF HISTORIC SITES  
CONTEXT STATEMENT

February, 1993

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## HISTORIC OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

The City of Stayton Historic Overview is a study of events and themes in the history of Stayton. It is formatted according to the chronological periods outlined in the "Handbook to Historic Preservation Planning in Oregon," prepared by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). The Overview is an evolving document and should be updated on a regular basis.

### TEMPORAL BOUNDARIES: 1792 TO 1943

This Overview covers the period from 1792 to 1943.

The initial Euro-American exploration of the Columbia River Valley occurred in 1792. In May, 1792, American Captain Robert Gray, aboard the *Columbia Rediviva*, discovered the Columbia River. The Gray exploration was followed in October 1792 by the British exploration, led by Lt. William R. Broughton, commander of the *H.M.S. Chatham*. Broughton explored upriver to the west end of the Columbia Gorge.

The year 1940 marks the end of the "Motor Age" period. The year 1943 meets the 50-year criteria set forth by the National Park Service for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

### SPATIAL BOUNDARIES

The study area corresponds with the current urban growth boundary of the City of Stayton. Stayton was incorporated in 1891 and grew sporadically until 1930. Since 1930, Stayton has shown a steady, healthy growth pattern.

Only a portion of the study area was intensively surveyed and inventoried in the course of this project.

### TOPOGRAPHY

Stayton is located in southern Marion County in the eastern central portion of the Willamette Valley in northwestern Oregon. Salem, the state's capitol, is 17 miles to the west on Hwy 22; the Cascade Mountain Range and the Santiam Pass lie to the east on Hwy 22. The city is relatively flat except for the western edge of Fern Ridge, located in the northeast section of Stayton. The North Santiam River serves as the southern boundary of Stayton; the city is generally bound on the north by Hwy 22. The elevation of Stayton is approximately 450 feet above sea level.

The geology and physical topography of the Stayton area has impacted its development as a forestry and agricultural community.

The North Santiam River has a number of meanders, oxbow lakes, and flat open flood plains (Orr:181). Oligocene marine sedimentary rocks are present along the eastern margin of the Willamette Valley (Baldwin:52). Columbia River basalt, called the Stayton Lavas in this area, crops out in the Fern Ridge area north of Stayton. Flows in this area are about 400 feet thick and tend to be andesitic [fine grained, volcanic rock] in composition (Baldwin:58).

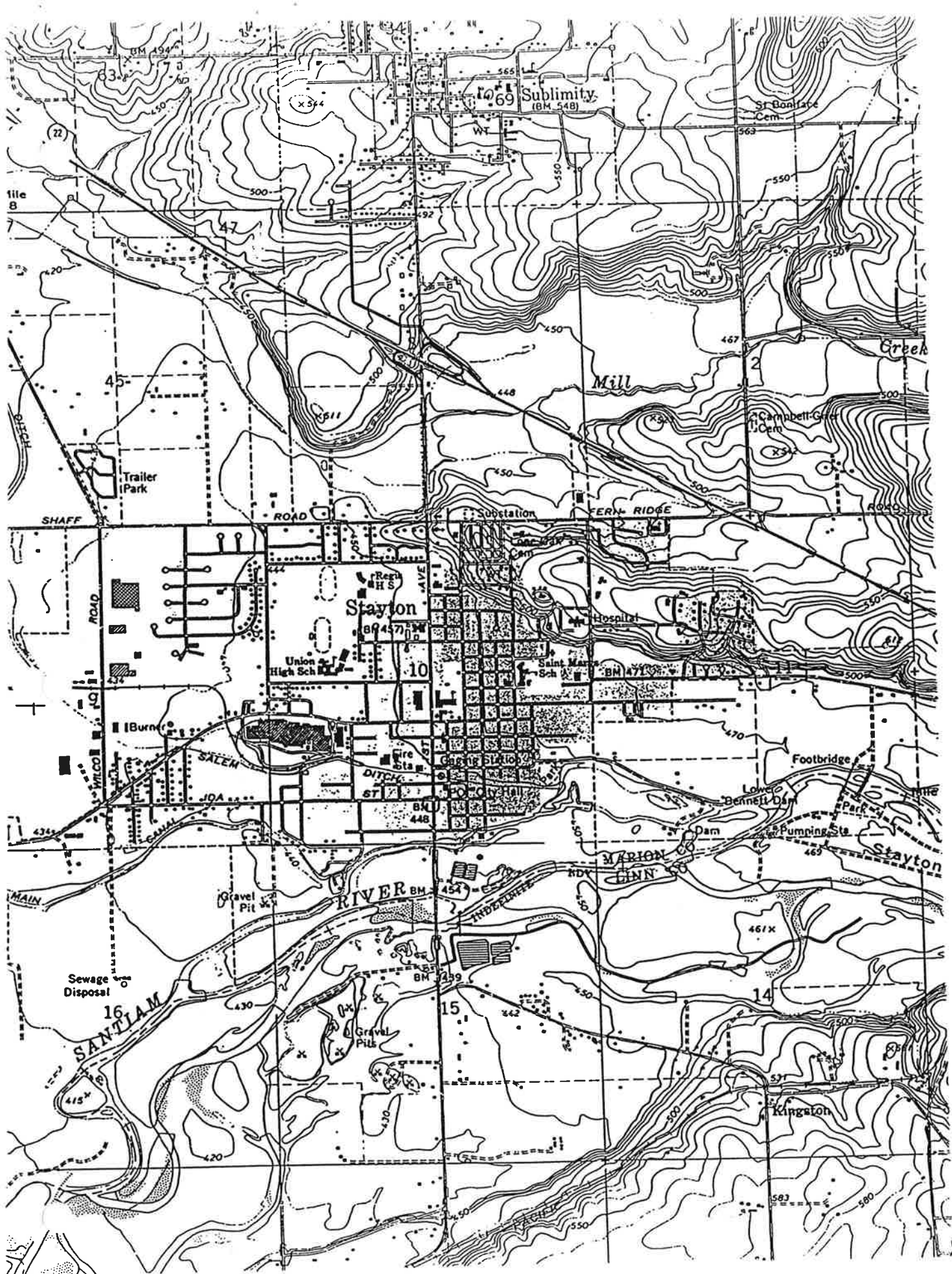


FIGURE 1  
 STAYTON AND VICINITY, 1986  
 (USGS Topographic Quadrangle: Stayton, Oregon)

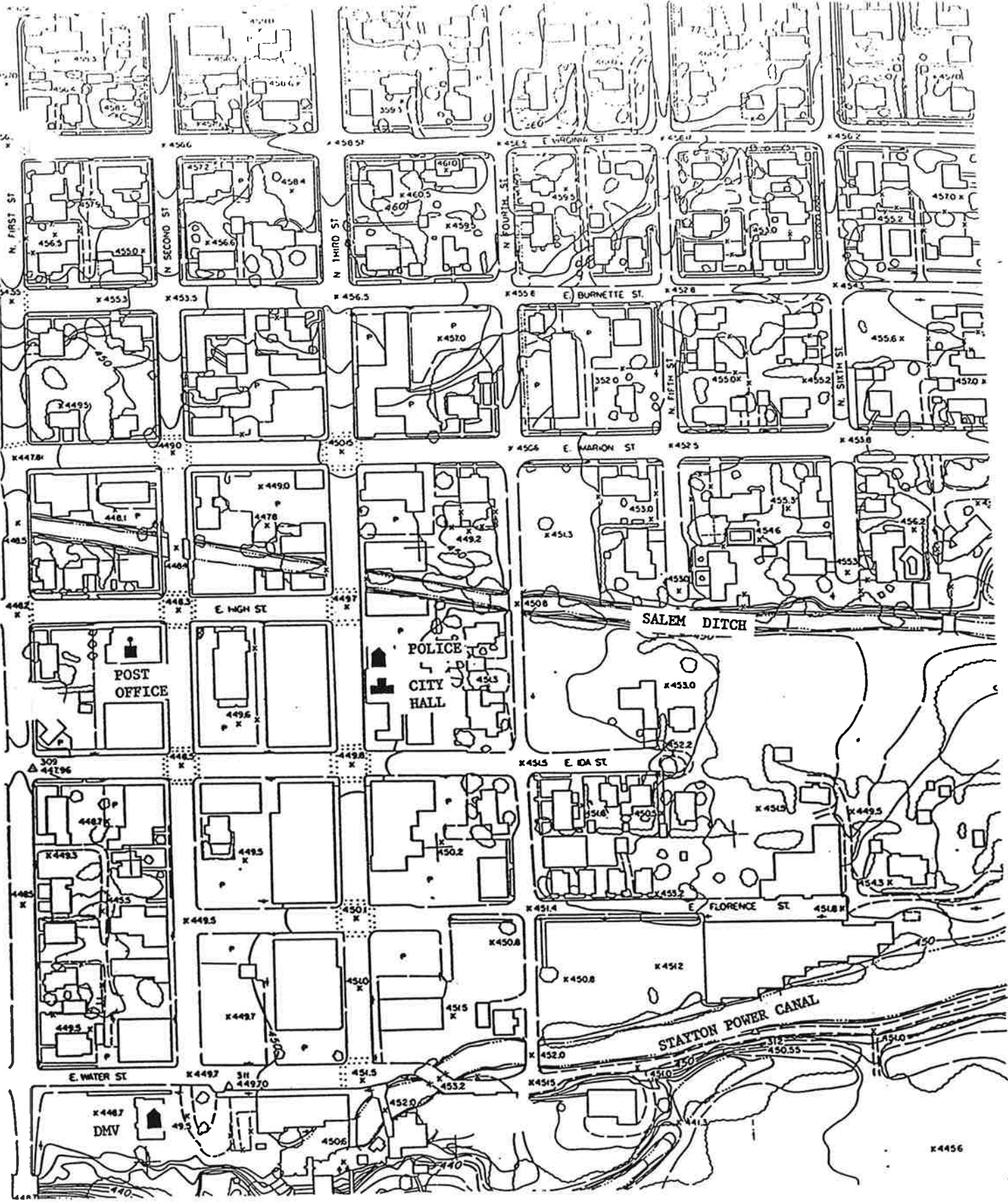


FIGURE 3  
Downtown Stayton, 1990

## IDENTIFICATION

This section relates to the identification of cultural resources by theme and resource type. The methodology statement outlines the steps taken to carry out the survey and inventory phase of this project.

### METHODOLOGY

The City of Stayton Historic Resource Inventory and Historic Context Statement were prepared by Tod L. Ginsbach, City of Stayton Planning Intern. Mr. Ginsbach has nearly completed work on his bachelor of science degree in geography from Western Oregon State College. Other internships Mr. Ginsbach has completed were with the City of Salem Public Works Department, Polk County Planning Department, and Linn County Board of Commissioners. David W. Kinney, Stayton City Administrator, served as project coordinator. The project began in November 1991 and was completed in February, 1993.

On July 20, 1992, the Stayton City Council adopted Ordinance No. 707, amending Stayton Municipal Code Section 17.12.480, "Historic Preservation Procedure." An Intergovernmental Cooperative Agreement was entered into by the Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD), the City of Stayton, and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) of the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department for Stayton to complete its historic resource inventory and Goal 5 compliance for the Stayton Comprehensive Plan. The city was awarded grant money in the amount of \$3,000, with DLCD and SHPO each providing \$1,500. This agreement was reviewed and approved by the Stayton City Council in December, 1992.

The city retained the services of Koler/Morrison Historic Preservation and Planning Consultants, Oregon City, Oregon, to assist with review of the context statement and Goal 5 requirements.

Phase I of the project consisted of a literature search, investigation of existing materials, and preparation of an overview of City of Stayton history.

Phase II consisted of: 1) Field survey and inventory of properties (including updating of the existing inventory); 2) Evaluation of resources; and 3) Preparation of the inventory forms and the final document. Community involvement in Phase II occurred in public meetings before the Stayton Planning Commission and the Stayton City Council at which inventoried properties and supplemental information were reviewed. In addition to public testimony, members of the Santiam Historical Society and long-time Stayton residents provided documents and photographs and other relevant information through oral history interviews.

Phase III involved a deeper, more intensive inventory of the individual properties identified during Phase II. Again, long-time residents and property owners provided supplementary information.

### LITERATURE SEARCH AND STATEMENT OF HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENTS

The project began by review of all existing materials pertaining to the historical development of the community. Knowledgeable individuals were identified and contacted for oral history interviews. A draft historic context statement was prepared and forwarded to SHPO for review in May, 1992. The draft statement was also sent to Koler/Morrison, consultants, in December, 1992 for review and editing.

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**PREVIOUS SURVEYS**

This project represents the first in-depth survey and inventory of cultural resources in the study area. Previous survey work in the study area included the "Statewide Inventory of Historic Sites and Buildings" conducted by Stephen Dow Beckham in 1976 for the State Historic Preservation Office. In 1979, the city created a list of 12 sites as the city's historic sites inventory in the Stayton Comprehensive Plan, but no historic preservation requirements were established.

From 1985 to 1989 the City of Stayton conducted a periodic review of the Stayton Comprehensive Plan. In order to comply with the Land Conservation and Development Commission's (LCDC) Goal 5 requirements, the periodic review process included the consideration of zoning code amendments to create historic preservation procedures to identify and designate historic resources. During a 1989 public hearing concerning historic resources, Ernst Lau, long-time local resident, submitted a list of buildings, structures, sites, and objects to the city for consideration. In December, 1989, the Stayton City Council adopted an amended version of the 1979 inventory and the historic preservation procedures and submitted them as a component of the Stayton Comprehensive Plan to DLCD for acknowledgement.

As part of the Periodic Review Acknowledgement Order, LCDC found the city had not adequately completed the historic resources inventory or prepared an historic context statement. On April 25, 1991 LCDC ordered the City of Stayton to complete an historic resource inventory in compliance with Goal 5. requirements.

## HISTORIC PERIODS

### 1792 - 1811: EXPLORATION

Native Americans, the primary inhabitants of the Stayton area prior to the 1850s, were mostly of the Kalapuya tribe. Those who lived to the south were known as the Santiams; those to the north were of the Molalla tribe. The famous Klamath Trail, or "Indian Highway," crossed the Santiam River below Stayton.

The Indians made their settlements at sites where they had access to fresh water, good drainage, and a view of the nearby countryside.

The Native Americans were decimated by disease introduced by the early explorers. The first epidemic, smallpox, swept westward out of Missouri and through the Pacific Northwest in 1782-1783; it probably destroyed half of the Indian population where it struck (Mackey:20).

Although the initial Euro-American contact and discovery of Oregon did not touch upon the central Willamette Valley and the Stayton area, the major achievements which occurred during this period led to subsequent exploration and settlement of the valley.

On May 11, 1792, Captain Robert Gray became the first Euro-American to cross the Columbia River bar. Naming the river after his ship, the *Columbia Rediviva*, Gray helped to establish the United States' presence in the Pacific Northwest.

Spanish Captain Bruno Heceta sailed to the mouth of the Columbia in 1775, but did not cross the bar. Based on later explorers' reports of European traits, such as blue eyes, in the native population of coastal Oregon and the lower Columbia, some historians speculate that a few Spanish sailors were left behind by Heceta. However, no documentation substantiates these reports and Gray is generally given credit as the first Euro-American to land in the region.

British Captain James Cook, in his voyage of 1776 to 1780, explored the Pacific Northwest coast. Although he missed the Columbia River entirely, his voyages led to future exploration of the northwest coast, particularly by Euro-American fur traders.

Gray discovered the Columbia on his second voyage to the northwest coast. Between 1787 and 1790, Gray sailed the coast to obtain furs for trade with China. His 1792 voyage resulted in the exploration of approximately 25 miles of the Columbia River above its mouth.

In October, 1792, Lt. William R. Broughton led a British exploration under Captain George Vancouver's command. Broughton explored and mapped the lower 100 miles of the river as far as present-day Vancouver, Washington. He named Mt. Hood and claimed the land for Great Britain. Broughton noted deserted Indian villages along the banks of the river, the first indication that many Indians had recently died of disease (Dicken:49).

These early sea explorations aroused a keen interest in the Oregon Country that soon led to land exploration. As early as 1782, Thomas Jefferson had suggested to George Rogers Clark the possibility



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layers of leaves and the ovens were sealed with a mat and earth. The camas was allowed to bake in this manner for two or three days. When removed, the cooked bulbs were ready for immediate consumption or to be sun-dried and packed into large loaves to be stored until later in the year.

The tarweed seed required its own special labor. To clear enough area for these plants to grow and for the Indians to have sufficient space to dry the pods, the Kalapuya periodically set fire to the fields of the valley.

Other important vegetables included wappato roots, tarweed seed, acorns (containing bitter tannic acid which had to be carefully prepared by leaching before they could be eaten), and hazelnuts. Each plant part was utilized: roots, stalks, flowers, fibers, and seeds—each had its own use.

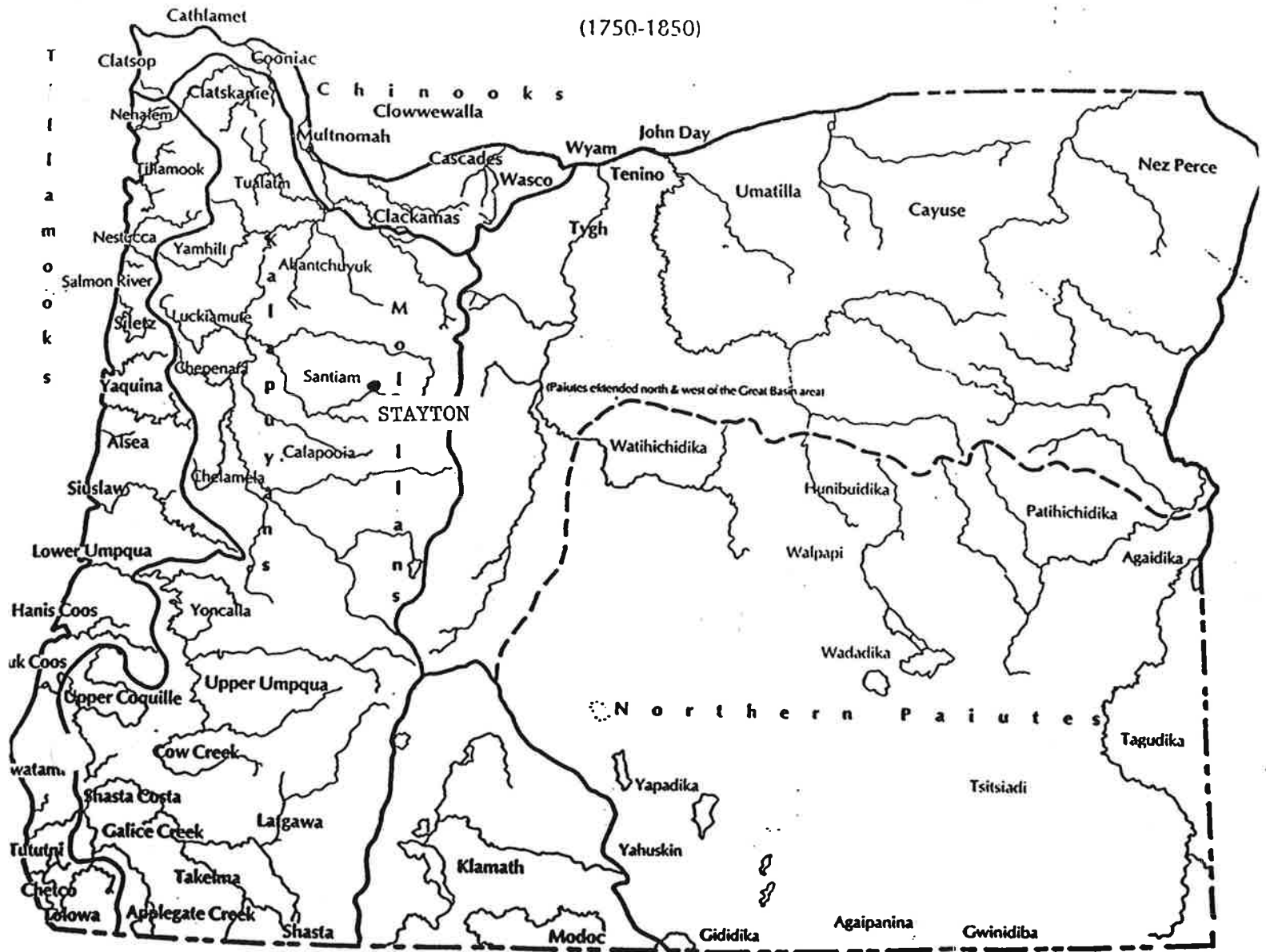
The Indians used plants not only food, but also for dye, tea, medicine, even insect repellents.

Deer and elk were important food sources as well. Other animals which were part of the Indian diet were ducks, geese, pigeons, and the black bear. They also gathered fresh-water mussels, crawfish, and fished for trout, steelhead, and salmon. Lamprey eels were also taken from streams.

The white man's visits to current Marion County and the Stayton area, and the initial settlement of Marion County would not occur until early missions and fur trading were established in the 1820s and 1830s.

# Tribes & Bands of Traditional Oregon

(1750-1850)



(Zucker, et al., 1983)

FIGURE 5  
Tribes & Bands of Traditional Oregon