

A wooden sign for the Lacenter Historical Museum. It features the text "LACENTER HISTORICAL MUSEUM" in a bold, sans-serif font. The sign is flanked by two small line-art icons of houses with chimneys.

LACENTER
HISTORICAL MUSEUM

7 Historic, Archaeological and Cultural Preservation

Historic Context

The City of La Center is located within territory historically occupied by native Cowlitz and Chinook peoples of the Lower Columbia River. The term “Chinook” refers to both a linguistic classification, as well as a cultural one. Traits common to Chinookan-speaking groups include a reliance on aquatic resources (primarily anadromous fish, such as salmon), woodworking (exemplified by planked houses and dugout canoes), twined basketry, untailored clothing, a distinctive art style, and ~~a social emphasis on social~~ ranking, ~~including the practice of slavery~~. Ethnographies place the Lewis River Cowlitz in this area at the time of European contact.

The Multnomah ~~sub-sub~~group of the Upper Chinookan speakers occupied the Columbia River from near Deer Island to just east of the Washougal River. William Broughton reported Multnomah villages on Wapato Island (now Sauvie Island) in 1792. Lewis and Clark reported two settlements located along Vancouver Lake, and Cathlapottle, located near the mouths of Lake River and the Lewis River.

Native populations centered their tribal activities along major salmon streams, but they also harvested resources from the productive inland prairies. Lodging consisted of cedar longhouses in the winter and temporary camps in the spring through fall as people traveled to traditional areas to dig ~~wapato~~ Wapato and ~~camas~~ Camas and seek game and berries. Rivers, such as the East Fork ~~of the~~ Lewis River, were important transportation corridors and sources of food.

By the late ~~18th~~ eighteenth century, the Native Peoples of the Lower Columbia had come into contact with Euro-American traders who plied the ~~Northwest~~ northwest Coast trading with the natives, primarily in furs. Newcomers carrying disease unknown in the Lower Columbia Basin devastated the native populations, essentially destroying their traditional ~~lifeways~~ ways of life within a single generation.

In 1825, the Hudson Bay Company established Fort Vancouver, the first permanent non-native settlement in the Pacific Northwest. Fort Vancouver was an important trade center and provided a strong foot-hold for Euro-American settlement. In 1848, by an Act of the United States Congress, the La Center area became part of the Oregon Territory. The earliest map of the La Center area is the 1854 General Land Office map of Township 4 North, Range 1 East, W.M. This map depicts unclaimed land along the shores of the East Fork Lewis River, then known as the “South Fork Cattlepootle River”.

The earliest Euro-American settlers to stake a claim in the area were John Pollock in 1849 and John H. Timmen and Aurelius Wilkens who staked claims upriver in 1852. The early homesteaders cleared farms and grazed cattle. By 1870, sternwheelers (or lighter boats, when the water was low) plied the East Fork Lewis River trading dry goods and groceries for cash, butter, eggs and honey. In 1872, at the site of present-day La Center, sternwheeler ~~e~~ Captain William G. Weir built a house and opened a store and a post office. Mr. Timmen filed the town’s first plat in 1875, naming the community “Timmen’s Landing”.

Figure 1: *The Lucea Mason Sternwheeler*



Important events in the ~~town's~~City's ~~early~~ history include:

- » 1876 – The region's first commercial logging operations were underway.
- » Mid-1880s – the town included two hotels, a Methodist church, a grist mill, a brickyard, a post of the Grand American Army of the Republic, and a grange hall.
- » 1888 – The town's name changes from "Timmen's Landing" to "La Center".
- » 1907 – The population reaches approximately 300. Eight sawmills operated within five 5 miles of town, and the town accommodated four general stores, one drugstore, two hotels, one restaurant, one livery stable, two blacksmith shops, one saloon, one hospital, one furniture store, and one pool room.
- » 1909 – La Center incorporates on August 23~~rd~~ and Clark County acknowledges the municipality of La Center. Population growth slows and even dips down to 200 people as the nearby forests are logged-out.
- » 1918 – The Pacific Highway, the major north-south highway on the West Coast, was routed through La Center.
- » 1985 – La Center legalized card -room gambling, which provided a significant boost to the local tax base and city revenues.
- » 1994 to present ~~2007~~ – ~~faces~~ The City faced explosive growth, slowed only by the Great Recession of 2007.
- » 2007 to present – La Center experienced rapid growth and significantly expanded its city limits.

- » 2017 – The Cowlitz Tribe opened the ilani Casino Resort, after a lengthy legal battle over the Tribe’s right to establish a reservation on which to build the casino.

La Center residents are proud of their history, their connection to the river, and their small-town character. However, While there are no local buildings or structures listed on the National Register of Historic Places, La Center area- several sites are properties listed on the Clark County Register

Figure 2: Summit Grove Lodge

of Historic Places local registers, including:



Clark County Register of Historic Places

- » The Francis G. Lawton House (1900), 5404 NE Lockwood Creek Road
- » Summit Grove Lodge (1927), 30810 NE Timmen Road

Buildings and Sites on the Clark County Heritage Roster:

- » John Pollock’s Grave, NW Pollock Road
- » La Center Community Library (Old Hospital) (circa 1905 – moved to present location in 2001), 1402 Lockwood Creek Road

Other significant buildings and structures in La Center include:

- » The Mount Zion IOOF Cemetery (La Center Cemetery) (1840), West-west of La Center High School
- » La Center Community Library (Old Hospital) (Circa 1905 — moved to present location in 2001), 1402 Lockwood Creek Road

- » Old Church and Parsonage (pre-1914), NE corner of 4th Street and Birch Avenue
- » La Center Grange (No. 48) (1899), 328 West 5th Street
- » La Center Tavern (1923) (~~Former~~former City Council Chambers), 107 East 4th Street.
- » The Mayor's House (1904), 305 West 5th Street
- » Bridge pilings on Pollock Road from former La Center bridge
- » Old sternwheeler dock in East Fork Lewis River
- » Chips Casino (formerly Palace Casino with roller skating rink) (1924), 318 NW Pacific Highway
- » Top Dog Groomer (former historic bank) (1910), 115 East 4th Street
- » Historic Downtown Residences
 - 530 Aspen Avenue (1910)
 - 580 Aspen Avenue (1935)
 - 602 Aspen Avenue (1920)
 - 630 Aspen Avenue (1918)
 - 725 Aspen Avenue (1908)

Goal 7.1 Historic, Archaeological, ~~&and~~ Cultural Preservation Goal

La Center shall identify and encourage the conservation of ~~federal, state, and local~~ historic, archaeological, and cultural lands, sites, and structures of ~~federal, state, tribal, and local~~ significance within the ~~City~~ City of La Center and its ~~UGA~~ urban growth area.

Historic, Archaeological, ~~&and~~ Cultural Preservation Policies

Policy 7.1.1 ~~La Center shall w~~Work with Clark County, ~~the Cowlitz Indian Tribe~~, and other interested agencies and organizations to help maintain and update the current inventory of historic, archaeological, and cultural resources in La Center.

Policy 7.1.2 La Center shall wWork to increase recognition and public awareness of historic, archaeological, and cultural resources through educational and interpretive projects that highlight sites included or eligible for inclusion on the Clark County Heritage Register, Washington Heritage Roster, or the National Register of Historic Places, including a walking tour map of City art work and historic buildings created by the La Center Arts Council.

Policy 7.1.2Policy 7.1.3 La Center shall consider creating and establishing a Historic Preservation Committee in order to adequately protect and designate historic sites of local significance in the city.

Policy 7.1.3Policy 7.1.4 La Center shall pProtect archaeological resources in accordance with state and federal laws as implemented in the La Center Municipal Code.

Policy 7.1.4Policy 7.1.5 La Center shall pProvide assistance to developers, landowners, and the construction trade regarding appropriate ~~re-re~~use and rehabilitation of identified historic sites and buildings, when appropriate.

Policy 7.1.6 La Center shall pProvide assistance to developers, landowners, and others interested in obtaining grants and receiving available tax incentives for ~~re-re~~use and rehabilitation of identified historic sites and buildings, when appropriate.

Policy 7.1.5Policy 7.1.7 La Center shall continually coordinate with the Cowlitz Indian Tribe and other area tribes to protect and maintain culturally significant resources, artifacts, sites, and lands.

Figure 3: Church from 5th Street

