

## The Enterprising Town of Mount Vernon

From a description by Dick Fallis, Historian, Skagit County Pioneer Association, 1986

On February 22, 1877 Harrison Clothier, a traveling schoolmaster, was joined at Mount Vernon by Ed English, one of his former students from Wisconsin. They formed a partnership, bought riverfront land from Jasper Gates, build a store, secured a post office, and laid out four blocks of town site.

A massive log jam had long blocked the Skagit River beyond this point but was just then being cleared away. It would be some time before the surging Skagit would be fully navigable.

Mount Vernon was incorporated as a town June 27, 1890. A hotel, restaurant and saloon soon adjoined the trading post, marked by a huge American Flag made by members of the settlement.

The settlement served homesteaders, prospectors and logging camps as the resources of the upper river were unlocked. Clothier and English engaged in logging operations, which eventually became their major enterprise.

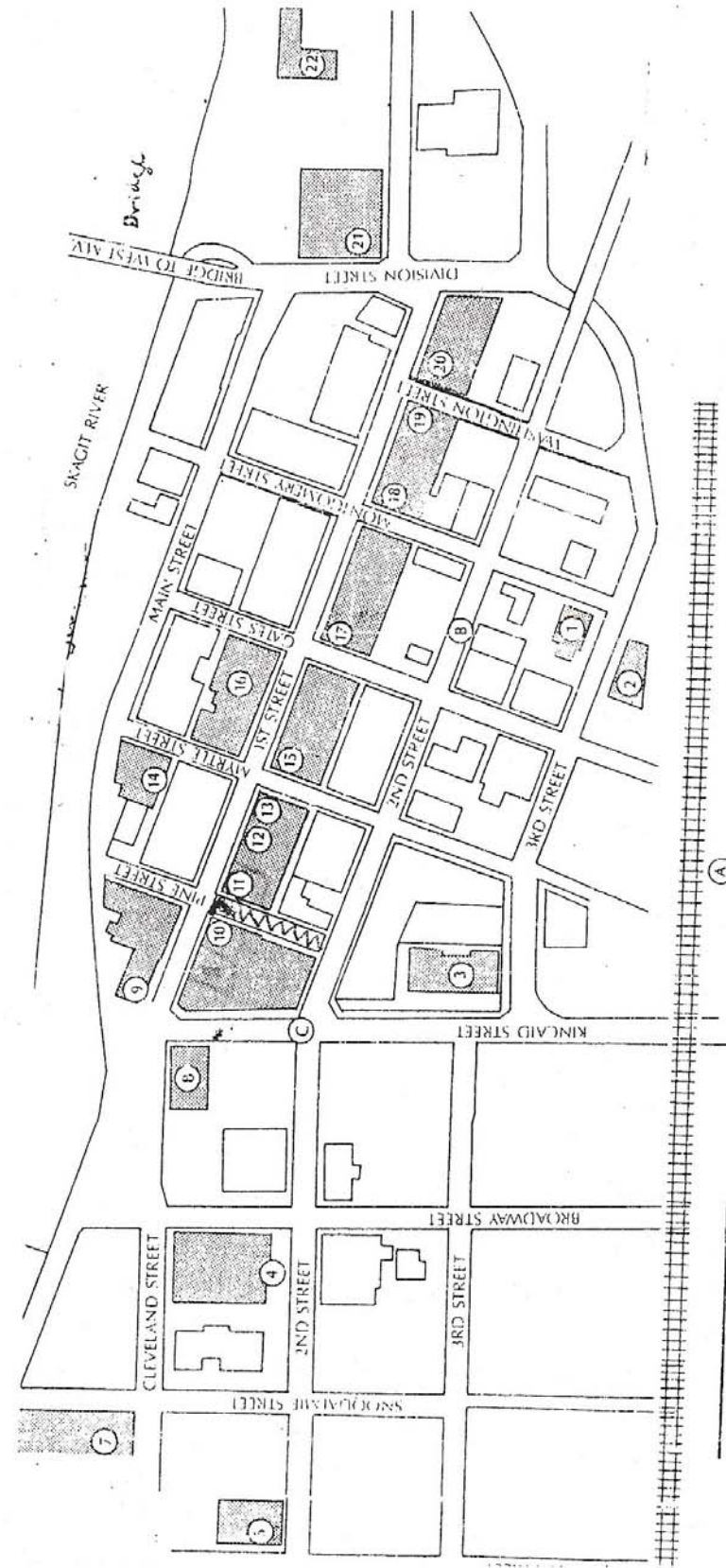
Mount Vernon soon had a doctor, drugstore, jeweler, newspaper, schoolhouse, churches, and lodge halls.

In 1880, Harry Clothier was elected Auditor of Whatcom County-- which still included all of Skagit.

Skagit County broke away in 1883. Clothier was a leading force when Mount Vernon won the County Seat from La Conner in 1884. Later, after ten years of challenge, the permanent County Courthouse was built in Mount Vernon. Kincaid Street is named after Orrin Kincaid, a founding father of Skagit County and early champion of Mount Vernon.

Dairying was a promising industry for the lush flats and logged-off lands. Mount Vernon Commercial Club members, working with dairying interests, induced major creameries and condenseries to locate here. Mount Vernon long reveled in its nickname, "Milk City".

Food processing, canning, seed production and distribution have been valued industries here. Innovations in specialized horticulture, bulb and flower growing have brought distinction to Mount Vernon.



## A Walking Tour of Historic Sites in Downtown Mount Vernon, Washington

(The numbers of the buildings are retained from the Tour Guide published in 1986 by Dick Fallis.)

1) Post Office (1934-1964), SW corner of 3rd St. and Montgomery. Solid brick building.

2) Pacific Fruit and Produce Warehouse, 404 3rd St. Supply and distribution center, next to the railroad tracks. Now Skagit River Brewery. (Note proximity to the early Railroad Depot platform west of the tracks, Kincaid to Myrtle St.)

Second Street is the former Pacific Highway, Route 99, which ran the length of the West Coast.

3) County Courthouse. Hand-made American flag made in 1877 by settlers, is in a case in the lobby.

5) Armory, NW corner of S. 2nd and Milwaukee St. Built in 1932, a drill place for National Guard.

6) Alf Christianson Seed Co. warehouse (9 acres, east of the railroad tracks): Processor, shipper, developer of seeds for world market.

7) William Dale home, SW corner Cleveland and Snoqualmie (1901)

8) SE Corner of 1st and Kincaid: Site of the experimental farm of Capt. D.F. Decatur, early citizen.

9) NW corner, 1st and Kincaid: For years, Vaux Pharmacy. Site of first steam electric plant, and Depot for early electric Interurban Railroad that ran from Seattle to Bellingham (1912-26).

On the Rivetment: At the foot of Myrtle St., original City Dock serving sternwheeler and other river boats. In the fence, see the Memorial in honor of those who worked on removal of the log jam along the river.

NE corner, 1st St. and Kincaid: The Lincoln Theatre, built 1926, now restored and on National Register of Historic Places.

Pine Square (1st and Pine to 2nd St.):

- 10) Matheson Building. First building constructed for Skagit County Courthouse (1893).
- 11) Union Block: the Pioneer Building. Early commercial storefronts including the Pastime Theater.
- 12) 604 S. 1st St. Lobby of the former Windsor Hotel, now the President apartments.
- 13) SE corner, 1st and Myrtle: An early local bank for local ranchers and farmers; two stories were added in 1922.
- 14) SE corner, Main and Myrtle: former Skagit River Bakery with brick baking ovens
- 15) NE corner 1st and Myrtle: early bank building
- 16) 509 So. 1st St. Site of early Louvre Hotel and cafe. Formerly Cascade Sports
- 17) 1st and Gates: Site of the cabin of Mount Vernon's first settler, Jasper Gates. See the statue of Gates and his grandson. Former site of the Rainier Bank building.
- 18) NE corner, 1st and Montgomery: Odd Fellows Hall. Also site of temporary county courthouse and post office.
- 19) SE corner, 1st and Washington: Lido Theater. Previously site of elaborate wooden Down's Opera House, built 1892 for traveling entertainment.
- 20) SE 1st and Division: Knights of Pythias Hall (1925). Now the Skagit Valley Food Coop building, owned by the Coop.
- 21) NW 1st and Division: Carnation Building, condensery in the days Mount Vernon was called "Milk City" (1906)
- 22) 211 N. 1st St: Valley Bank, site of the early Siwash Shingle Mill. ("Shingle scrip" was once a common currency in Mount Vernon!)