

Appendix A: Timeline of Washington history

We aren't certain when humans first lived in Washington. Some think people first came by boat from Asia or islands in the Pacific. Others think the first people crossed a land bridge that, during the last Ice Age, connected Siberia and Alaska. Many Native peoples believe they have always been here.

Native Americans all over North America are devastated by smallpox and other diseases brought by Europeans. Before European settlers ever arrived in Washington, the population of Native tribes had been reduced – possibly by as much as 80%, though no one knows for sure.

1770's



Image courtesy Washington State Historical Society, Tacoma

The Lewis and Clark expedition travels across the country, down the Snake and Columbia Rivers, and reaches the Pacific Ocean.

1805-1806

A treaty leaves the Pacific Northwest in a state of “joint occupancy” by Britain and the United States, and ends Spanish claims to this area.

1819

1579

British explorer Sir Frances Drake explores the Washington coast, beginning a long period of exploration by people from England, France, and Spain.

1792

A Spanish explorer, Salvador Fidalgo, establishes the first European settlement in Washington at Neah Bay. During the same year, American Captain Robert Gray enters the Columbia River, which he names after his ship, and Grays Harbor, which is named after him.

1825



Image courtesy Washington State Historical Society, Tacoma

The Hudson's Bay Company establishes Fort Vancouver as a center of the fur trade. (In 1811, another company, called the Pacific Fur Company, built forts at Astoria and Okanogan.) In 1833, the Hudson's Bay Company also builds Fort Nisqually.