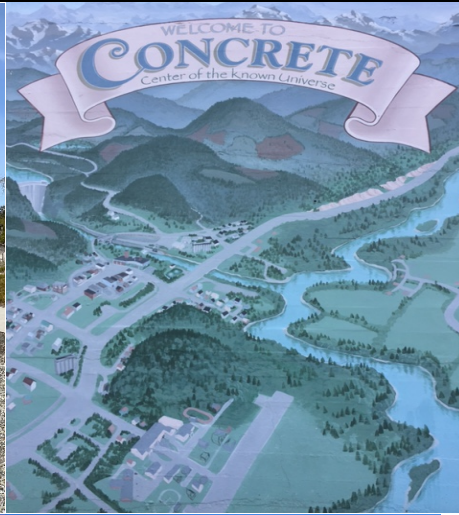
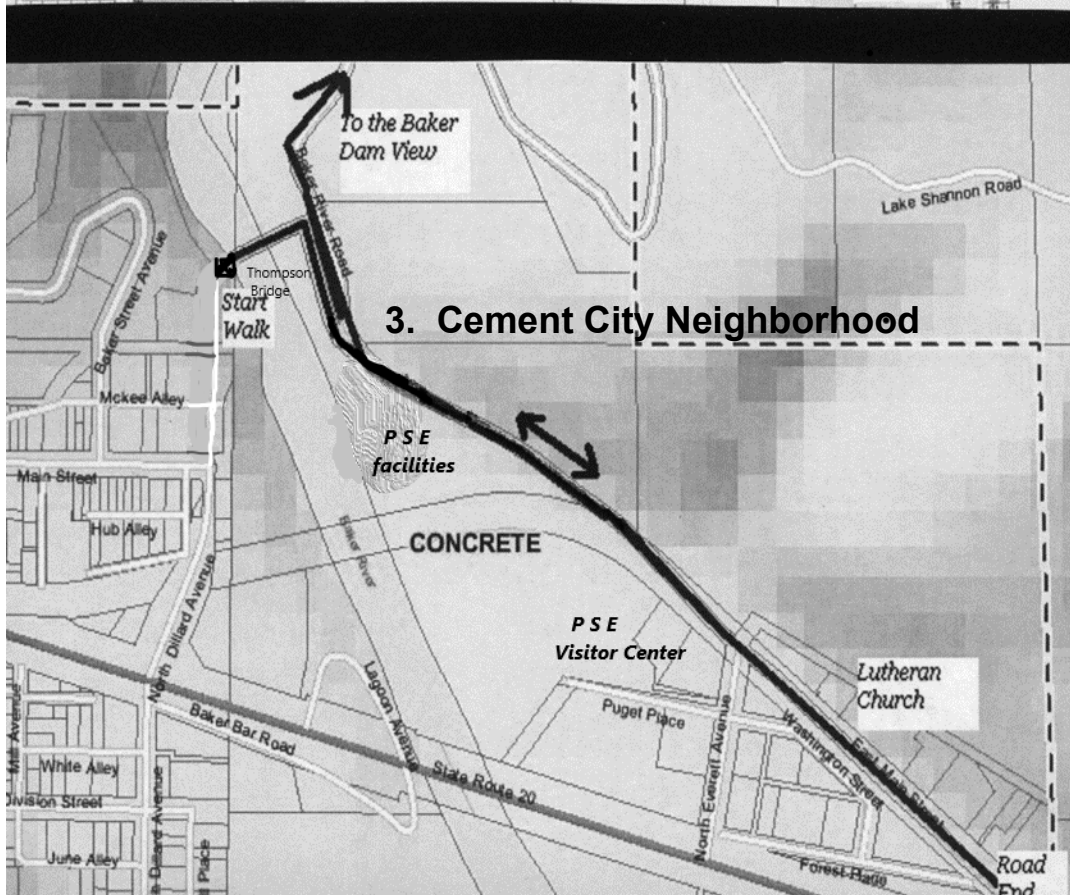
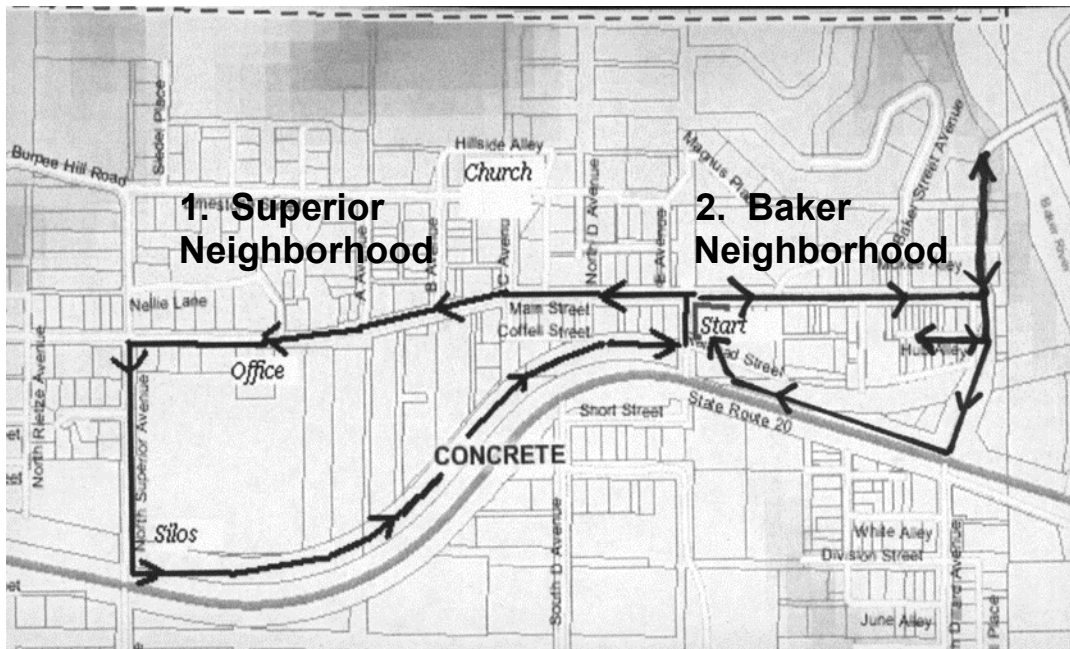


Historic Walking Tour through the TOWN of CONCRETE



Created by the Concrete Heritage Museum Association



**Three Neighborhood Walking Tours guide you through the Town of Concrete.
As you walk, enjoy the stories and pictures of buildings and structures that have
survived, changed or disappeared over the last century.**

#1. The **Superior Neighborhood** (1.0 mile) segment includes historic schools, churches, and the remains of the Superior Portland Cement Plant site (now known as Silo Park).

#2. The **Baker Neighborhood** (0.8 mile) segment takes you through downtown Concrete, and includes the Thompson Bridge viewpoint and the Concrete Heritage Museum.

#3. The **Cement City Neighborhood** (1.1 miles) segment includes the Thompson Bridge, the area east of the Baker River and the Puget Sound Energy Visitor Center. The route can be lengthened to 1.8 miles if you include the more strenuous Dam viewpoint (0.4 mile) side trip.

Parking for Walking Tours #1 or #2: The **Concrete Chamber of Commerce** is located in the Ted W. Anderson East Skagit County Community Resource Center, at 45770 Main Street. Parking is available on Main Street, in the Resource Center lot, or in the lower parking lot at the Community Center.

Parking for Walking Tour #3: The Town of Concrete parking lot ("**Bear Square**") is at the corner of Main Street and Baker Street, just one block away from the tour start at the Thompson Bridge.

WALKING TOUR #1: SUPERIOR NEIGHBORHOOD

Begin at the Resource Center building. It was constructed by Skagit County in 2003, and it includes the Chamber of Commerce/Licensing office as well as County and Community Action offices. Named to honor Ted Anderson, the County Commissioner who championed the project, it replaced an older (1912) structure. A livery stable for horses was the first building on this site. It was later converted into a gas station and garage. The large (12" X 12") timbers supporting the Resource Center's walkway are recycled clear fir beams that originally supported the stable roof and were salvaged when the old structure was removed.

Start Walking Tour #1 by crossing Main Street to view the sign that was carved in 2008 to celebrate the 2009 Concrete Centennial. The carvers' names are on the back side of the left post. Lifetime resident George Theodoratus donated the logs; his name is on the back of the top log. Next to the sign, the flagpole and monument were dedicated on 11/11/11 to honor all the veterans of Concrete. The short street connecting Main to Highway 20 was renamed in 2011, in honor of Douglas Vose III, a local hero.

The sweeping Playground Park was created in 1910, providing a field for the turn-of-the-century national pastime of baseball. With a large population of young single men employed in logging, mill and cement work, Concrete's "Nighthawks" Town Team became a top team in the County's baseball leagues. One of many local parks, this field has also hosted a century of town celebrations and special events, from Cascade Days logger competitions to traveling circus shows. The playfield is backed by the 1923 Concrete High School building. Also dating from 1923, the separate wooden gymnasium building was partially funded by a large bequest from a local mill worker, Mike Moore. Local children, in turn, collected pennies to furnish a headstone for him in the local Forest Park cemetery.

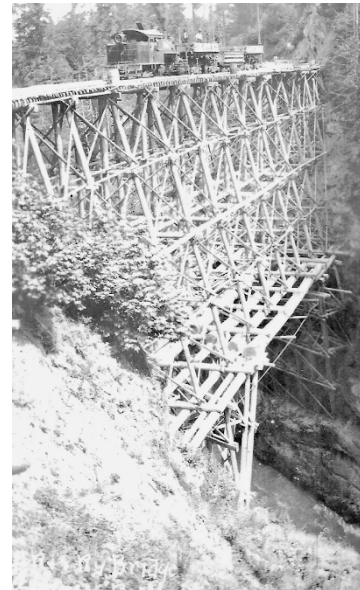


Once the centerpiece of the Town, on the upper bank to the right, the historic Grade School overlooked Playground Park. In this photo, you see the original (1910) cement structure on the left, where the children of Concrete attended their classes. In 1938 it was enlarged with the addition to the right. Eventually the school population outgrew all the buildings, and new schools were constructed near the Concrete Airport (across Highway 20).

A private owner purchased the landmark Grade School in 1990, and he added a third story with round "turrets" on the corners. As the community watched with great

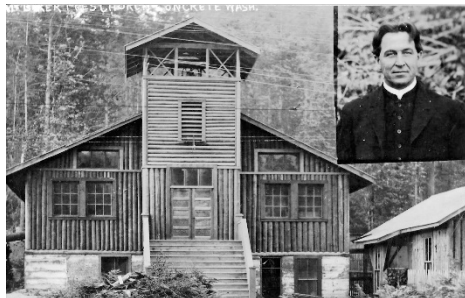
curiosity, renovation continued on the “Castle” until it was eventually vacated, then destroyed by a fire in 2008, and ultimately demolished in 2009.

Cross back to the south side of Main Street and continue walking west (to your right). You are following a historic rail line. In 1908, to supply the Superior Cement Plant with limestone, the Baker River & Mt. Shuksan Railroad line was built from the quarry site, across a high trestle spanning the Baker River. (The trestle timbers are still in place under the waters of Lake Shannon, upstream from the Lower Baker Dam.) The 1908 rail tracks skirted the north side of downtown, passed the Grade School and followed Main Street west a few hundred yards to the Superior Plant’s rock storage area.



In 1926, when the Lower Baker Dam was constructed, the railroad was replaced by a 1-1/2-mile-long tram line with 6-yard iron gondola buckets that continuously transported rock from the quarry to the Superior Cement Plant storage area. Nets were installed over Main Street to protect pedestrians and vehicles from falling rocks and debris. Students in the High School could watch the gondolas in operation from their classroom windows. Most of the towers have been dismantled although some can still be found in the woods above Baker River.

Only a few wooden buildings from the early 1900’s (other than residences) have survived fires and demolition. One is the Assembly of God Church on Main Street. This was built as an I.O.O.F (International Order of Odd Fellows) Lodge Hall about 1906, with the front rented out as a store. Later it was turned over to the Rebekah’s women’s (I.O.O.F.) auxiliary. In its early days, it was a popular gathering place for the younger generation for parties and dances.

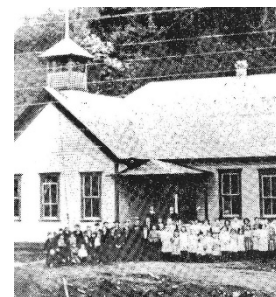


Across Main Street, the 1908 Mount Baker Presbyterian Church (45705 Main St.) is another of the oldest structures remaining in town. Originally a multi-denominational worship location, the Reverend L. C. Michaels designed it, and did most of the carpentry work on the original log construction. It includes a kitchen and banquet room on the lower floor.

As time passed, and families started to outnumber single workers, more churches came to guide the spiritual lives of residents in this frontier town. Behind the Presbyterian Church,

on Limestone Street you will find the Community Bible Church, a cement block building that was completed in the 1950’s. Farther to the west on Limestone Street we see St. Catherine’s Catholic Church overlooking the neighborhood. Built in 1913, its classic lines make this one of the most photographed churches in the county. (Ambitious walkers can take a short detour up the hill for a photo opportunity or a closer look.)

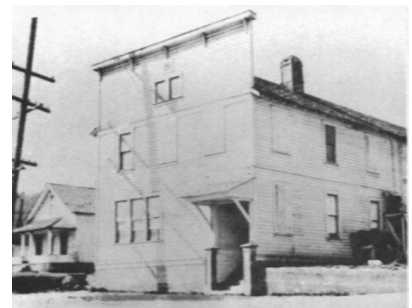
Back on Main Street, continue walking west to the Concrete Town Hall and Sheriff’s Office (45672 Main St.). This building has survived a relocation, and several changes in function. Originally constructed in 1908 it was the first wood-frame school building. However, with the rapid growth of the town, they immediately needed more space, and a cement Grade School was constructed above Playground Park in 1910. The older school building remained on Main Street across from the Bank until the 1930’s, when it was moved to its current location. Town Hall has also in past years provided space for the Concrete Senior Center, and the Concrete Library.



Next door to Town Hall, the Concrete Post Office building was constructed with concrete block in 1960. It was originally Hoover's Food Center, built by Hargus Hoover and his sons Jack and Jerry, after their old wooden butcher shop in Superior Addition was destroyed by fire. Son Jack Hoover had the distinction of being the youngest mayor elected in Concrete. The first local (Baker community) post office was established in 1892. Rural mail delivery routes started in 1931. Before that time, each Upper Skagit community had its own post office.

Continue walking west up the sidewalk on Main Street, toward the former Superior plant site. In 1906, the small business district of "Superior Addition" was directly across the street, with several establishments including a saloon, hotel, and butcher shop. On the corner of "B" Street, the renovated "Rogge Building" (45555 Main St.) is the only wooden structure remaining from this group, and was originally the Concrete Bakery, owned by Joe Barta, and one of two bakeries operating in town. Across the alley, a home was built by Barta in 1915 for \$2,000, described as "a new bungalow, 34 X 48, with six rooms, a pantry, a bath, and a basement".

Most of the old wood-frame establishments that lined Main Street have disappeared over the years. The Superior Hotel, seen in the photo here, was built as a two-story rooming house for plant employees, but later was known as the "Clubhouse", and became an entertainment center with pool tables, card room, and a duck pin bowling alley on the upper floor. Local stories tell that the noise from the bowling alley caused the neighborhood dogs to howl at night, and a watchman was hired to run them off. In the photo, the two cement pillars that define the entrance were community landmarks for many years after the building was gone. They have been salvaged by the Town and will be relocated near Town Hall.



The Superior Portland Cement Company was started here in 1906 with an initial investment of \$500,000. John C. Eden was the founder and president of the company. His 80-acre claim was developed as an industrial cement plant and was destined to become one of the largest producers of Portland cement on the West Coast. This huge facility provided the raw material for many of Washington State's roads, bridges, waterways as well as the mighty hydropower dams on the Baker, Skagit, and Columbia rivers. The first loads of cement were shipped out on the railroad in 1908. Plant operations continued until 1969.

Pause a minute to stop at the Power Plant and the Office, the last remaining buildings from the Superior plant. From a tiny wilderness settlement in 1890, imagine the changes that resulted in the expansive community seen in the picture below. This was taken about 1930:



At first, Superior had a competitor located just across the Baker River: the Washington Portland Cement Company, which had started shipping cement out in 1906. (A detailed history of WPCCo can be found in Walking Tour #3, Cement City Neighborhood.) In 1912, a \$350,000 War Department contract was awarded to Superior for the Lake Washington Ship Canal and Ballard Locks project. This established the Superior plant as the primary supplier of Portland cement. By 1918, Superior had purchased the properties and interests of the Washington plant, and switched from oil firing to powdered coal. In 1919 they combined the equipment of both plants on this site, creating a rotating cement kiln that was 194 feet long, the largest on the Pacific Coast. Later, two more kilns were added, and tall smokestacks were built to provide adequate draft.

Electric power was one of the first requirements for the industry, and this was initially supplied by a hydroelectric plant on Bear Creek, five miles north of the town site. A log dam and powerhouse were constructed in 1906, and huge generators were moved on skids through the woods with teams of horses and "donkey engines". Power lines were routed into the expanding Superior site through the Power Plant, built in 1913. This smaller, square building to the east of the office was the first structure in town made from concrete. The generators provided enough electricity to add street lights to the town, and power to homes.



The 1931 Safety Award statue reminds us that the early cement industry was a dangerous place to work. The Superior plant had an active safety program that brought management and workers together on a monthly basis, and suggestions were welcomed for elimination of hazards. All the same, workers were killed or injured over the years due to accidents at the quarry or the plant. The statue pedestal lists following years when there were no fatalities. The photo above commemorates the Safety Award dedication. This was a prestigious award, and a time capsule which included commendations from the National Safety Council and Portland Cement Association was buried under the monument. The time capsule was opened in 2009 as part of Concrete's Centennial celebration, and its contents are on display at the Concrete Heritage Museum.

The Office Building, noteworthy for its 10" thick poured cement walls, was built in 1920 and continued to operate until 1969 when the plant shut down. The lower section, with a rear addition constructed in 1928, included a large vault and laboratory rooms where improvements to the cement "product" were tested and evaluated. The upstairs offices were for plant management and financial operations. Since the company had originally installed the town's electric, water, and phone systems, this was where utility bills were paid, as well as payroll distributed to the hundreds of workers from the plant and quarry. In 1947, plant and union negotiation reached a settlement that made the local workers the highest paid cement mill workers in the country. Wages of \$1.22½ per hour climbed to \$1.84½ per hour.

Across Main Street you will see a cement block residence. Known as the "Clinker Club" (45431 Main, corner of Nellie Lane), this was a guest house and meeting room used by the Superior Plant management, first to entertain prospective clients and later to hold plant safety meetings. It is currently used as a retreat by successors of the Superior Plant managers. The name "Clinker Club" came from a stage in the industrial process where limestone and clay were cooked at high temperatures to form a rock-like substance called "clinker". The striking trees planted in front are native to South America, and known as "Monkey Puzzle" or araucaria trees. The first building on this site was wood-frame. During the 1940's, walls were replaced, one at a time, with cement block. This was done because of war-time restrictions on new construction.

In 1906 the Superior Company first built houses for the workers who came to construct the plant and remained to operate it; this was known as "Superior Row". The small dwellings were later enlarged by moving two together and remodeling them for growing families. You can see several of these homes that remain along the north side of Main Street near the Superior Avenue intersection. By 1908 there were 400 men on the payrolls of the two cement plants. Wood-frame housing additions and shanty towns sprang up as jobs attracted more residents.

From 1906 until 1969, the cement plants at Concrete shipped out material for construction projects all over the West Coast. Local cement built the Lower Baker Dam, Seattle City Light's three dams on the Skagit (Diablo, Ross and Gorge), and dams on the Columbia (Grand Coulee and Rocky Reach), as well as numerous government construction projects around Puget Sound and throughout the Pacific during World War II. The Lone Star Cement Company took over the Superior plant in 1957 and operated it until its demise. The presence of gritty, gray dust had always been a problem in the community, covering homes, yards and cars for about three miles around. The company office provided acid to clean the annoying dust from car windshields. Although dust collectors were installed on the stacks, and upgraded in the 1940's, this only decreased the output to a degree. The last state sampling reported up to 656 tons of dust per square mile per month. Aging and obsolete equipment proved too expensive to renovate to meet air quality standards, and Lone Star decided to close the plant officially as of January 1969.

The large open area backed by cement silos was turned over to the Town of Concrete after the cement plant was closed and demolished. Plant equipment was dismantled between 1970 and 1972. The property was leveled and eventually transferred to the Town of Concrete in 1994 along with the Office building. It is now known as Silo Park. The current Fire and Life Safety Building was constructed and dedicated in 2015. This was a great improvement over the aging structure on Main Street which formerly housed the Town's fire equipment.

Continue west on Main Street, turn left at the corner of Main and Superior, and enjoy the brightly painted bird houses lining the fence of the Angele Cupples Community Garden. This 2010 addition to the town is named in honor of the first president of the Upper Skagit Garden Club. Silo Park amenities are being added, including a playground with a skateboard park and water park, public transit facilities, parking, and an electric vehicle charging station. Plans are being considered for a climbing wall on the silos.

Enjoy the view of 5400-foot Sauk Mountain to the east (if you are lucky enough to visit on a clear day!). Then looking ahead across Highway 20, you will see a cement building that is built across Superior Avenue like a bridge. This is the current Concrete High School, built in 1952. School buses used to load and unload students under the overpass, out of the weather. The roadsides under the building and lining the west side of the road are actually simulated rocks made from Concrete cement.

As you approach Highway 20, turn to your left and walk next to the enormous Concrete silos, designed to hold 100,000 bushels of cement powder. Cement was stored here to age before it was shipped out on railroad cars. A history display at the base of the silos features a picture of the former industrial complex.

"Welcome to Concrete". This weathered landmark sign looks old, but it is actually a much more recent addition. It was painted on the silos as a backdrop for a 1993 Warner Brothers movie called "This Boy's Life". The movie was based on a boyhood memoir by author Tobias Wolff, who lived in the Upper Skagit and attended school in Concrete in the 1950's. The filming was done in town, over several months. Downtown storefronts were filled with 1950's products, and dirt was sprayed on the buildings to produce a convincing cement-era backdrop. Locals were hired as "extras" and appeared in the movie along with Hollywood stars Robert DeNiro, Ellen Barkin, and a young Leonardo DiCaprio.

Continue east, on the Cascade Trail route, between the silos and Highway 20, which follows the old railroad grade for approximately a quarter mile. Behind Town Hall is the last section of railroad track left from the Great Northern Railroad. The Great Northern Railroad reached Baker in 1901, and continued east to the town of Rockport, where it later connected with a narrow-gauge line run by Seattle City Light to supply the dams and workers in the Upper Skagit. A great improvement over river boats and dirt wagon roads, the Great Northern trains brought in freight and passengers, and returned loaded with wood products (and, starting in 1906, cement) to market all over the rapidly developing West Coast.



The depot in the photo was built in 1908, near the current site of the Concrete Community Center. The railroad eventually decreased in usefulness as roads were built and automobiles and trucks changed the course of transportation in the twentieth century. After the cement plant closed in 1969 the railroad tracks between Concrete and Rockport were removed. An attempt was made to continue a passenger excursion train from Sedro-Woolley to Concrete, and a new passenger depot was built by the Port of Skagit County.

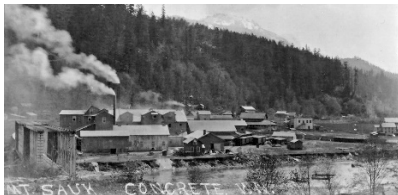
However, there was not enough demand to warrant the expense of maintaining the service. The depot building eventually became the Concrete Community Center. In 2000 the railroad right-of-way was converted into the Cascade Trail, part of the national Rails to Trails program, and managed by Skagit County. This level 23-mile route between Concrete and Sedro-Woolley invites hikers, bicyclists, and horseback riders to enjoy the scenic forests and farms of the Skagit Valley.

To return to your starting point, follow the Cascade Trail to Douglas Vose III Way, cross the street and return to the East County Resource Center.

WALKING TOUR SEGMENT 2: BAKER NEIGHBORHOOD

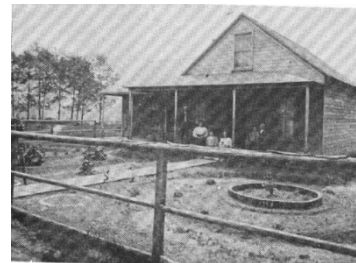
Starting from the East County Resource Center, follow Main Street east, up the hill, toward the business district for Walking Tour #2 (0.8 miles). Enjoy the story below as you walk toward Bear Square, in the center of downtown. The bench at the Bear is a good place to stop and observe, as you read about the unique cement buildings surrounding you.

Concrete, a small town situated in a strikingly beautiful convergence of broad rivers, dense forests and rugged mountains, has a unique story to tell about its past hundred-plus years. Imagine, climbing this hill through the trees, in a time when only Native Americans were here, fishing on the banks of the Baker River. This is where our story starts, with the exploration of the Upper Skagit in the 1800's. Early European and American explorers wrote expansively about the lush vegetation, the bounty of game and fish in the hills and rivers, the wild beauty of the mountain meadows, and the potential for settlement.



However, a number of travelers in these parts had a more commercial objective. There was a veritable flood of prospectors in the 1870's, lured up the Skagit by the promise of rich gold fields in the North Cascade Mountains. While many left in disappointment, a few stayed on to claim homesteads.

Richard Challenger filed a claim about 1888 to property on the west bank of the Baker River. He built a cabin, and listed his claim on early maps as "Minnehaha". In 1890, he sold the property to Magnus Miller, a blacksmith who had left Denmark in 1885 with his wife. They had lived in Seattle through the great fire of 1889, then left to seek their fortune up the Skagit. Once Miller had acquired the property, he changed the name of the claim to "Baker". The Millers built a large home that became a hostel for travelers, then began laying out streets and lots, and selling them to newcomers. In 1892 there were enough new residents to put in a request for a Baker post office, which was established in Miller's home, with his wife as the first postmaster. Their residence was surrounded by an attractive garden and rail fence, in the approximate location of the Upper Skagit Library. The Millers remained in Baker/Concrete through the early boom years, running the hotel and livery stable until 1912, when they moved back to Seattle. They are credited with building their hotel, a store, a show house, and a saloon, as well as supporting the community by donating building lots for schools and churches from their claim.



1901, when the Great Northern Railroad tracks were completed from Hamilton to Rockport, marked the start of the boom years. In 1904 the Baker River Lumber Company built a shingle mill where the railroad crossed the Baker, and was soon shipping out over a million shingles a day. Across the river, Amasa Everett had discovered deposits of fine limestone and clay on his homestead claim and was busy laying out streets and building lots of his proposed "Cement City", which became the Washington Portland Cement Plant. By 1906 the railroad was hauling out 2,500 barrels of Portland cement per day. 1906 also saw clearing for the new Superior Portland Cement Company, located to the west of the Baker town site.

All of this created great demand for a new labor force. Hundreds of workers headed up the Skagit, many of whom were recent European immigrants, willing to perform hard manual labor in the quarries, cement plants and lumber mills in exchange for a regular paycheck. Men from the mills and logging camps in the Upper Skagit congregated in Baker on weekends. Wooden buildings proliferated and lined both sides of Main Street with small shops, hotels and rooming houses. Newcomers could cash a paycheck, find a bath and a barber, and set up for a night or two of entertainment. There were plenty of enterprising businessmen (and "professional women" as well) ready to cater to their needs. Restaurants and saloons were rapidly opened along Main Street, and shops soon supplied merchandise ranging from prospecting supplies to furniture and hand-rolled cigars. Water lines, street lights, and wooden sidewalks were installed along the dirt street in 1910. Civic organizations built halls for dances and social events. The Fraternal Order of Eagles Aerie No. 1444 was established in 1906 in a building erected by Magnus Miller.



The two cement plants may have been business rivals, but they were in agreement that the two communities of Baker and Cement City were becoming an important entity, and an election on a petition of incorporation was held on April 27, 1909. It passed with a large majority. The matter of a name took some consideration. Rumored to have been influenced by a free barrel of whiskey provided by the Superior group, the name "Concrete" was chosen. Was it inspiration, or just good advertising? Over the years it has remained as a solid reminder of the town's roots.

Energized by the growing cement industry, business in the Town of Concrete also continued to grow. 1909 saw the opening of the first bank and the first dentist's office. Magnus Miller's Showhouse (where the town parking lot is now located) was a center for live entertainment ranging from talent shows to boxing matches, and brought in the new craze of "moving pictures" in 1910. Wooden sidewalks and street lights were installed along the dirt street in 1910, and a wooden trestle linked downtown Concrete to West Main and Superior Addition. The "Hamilton Herald" newspaper was purchased by H. G. Bratlie in 1910 and their printing equipment moved to a building just west of the Bank, where the name was changed to the "Concrete Herald". A telephone system installed by the Superior plant was taken over in 1912 by Kate Glover and Nell Wheelock as independent contractors. These enterprising sisters handled both switchboard duty and phone line installation; evenings, they were musicians at local dances.



Saloons were prominent until the onset of Prohibition in 1916 (Washington State's laws anticipated the national Prohibition amendment by four years). At that time, many local establishments became pool halls and card rooms. A fine example of woodwork from this era is the Hub Tavern's single-plank saloon bar and handsome back bar. It was brought to Concrete in 1912, and originally installed in another nearby building, the Olympia Bar. Owners of the Hub have enhanced this business by preserving the historic elements of the building and adding many displays of old-time memorabilia. All ages are welcome to visit.



The first major fire to devastate Concrete's Main Street occurred on July 2, 1915, taking out seven buildings on the south (right) side of the street, including the well-known "Whitney Hotel", noted for excellent accommodations, and reputed to run the best high-stake poker games in the county. A second major fire on September 17, 1921 destroyed three buildings on the north (left) side of Main and damaged several others. Other establishments suffered from fires at various times, or were rebuilt as "boom-town" wooden structures deteriorated. A town ordinance was passed after the 1921 fire, requiring

fireproof material for new construction. The easy availability of Portland cement encouraged rebuilding in this sturdy material, distinguishing Concrete's downtown.

From Bear Square, you can see up and down Main Street. Look for differences in the buildings that show the construction techniques of different eras. The photo here shows the south side of Main Street in the 1940's and many of the buildings are still easily recognizable.

Pouring concrete into reinforced wooden forms was the standard method of construction from 1913 through the 1920's. Walls of these buildings retain the horizontal board lines and close inspection reveals wood grain. Look up to see where ornamental cornices and lettering were added for visual interest. Examples are the 1909 State Bank of Concrete (now SaviBank), the 1919 "Argerin" building (home to the Concrete Department Store from 1936 to 2004, now the Baker River Woodworks), the "Model" building (just east of Cascade Supply), the "Club" (now the Hub Tavern), the Concrete Theatre and its remodeled lobby, the Act One Ice Cream Parlor (formerly Monrad's Grocery).



Over the years, some buildings have hidden their cement behind decorative fronts. Looking down the north side of Main Street, the Laundromat recently added a wood front with decorative second-story windows; on the west side of the building a new fountain square and mural recall the early cement plant gondolas.

The Concrete Liquor Store, with a green 1960's "Mirawall" facade was originally a 1918 Ford garage and service station. It was remodeled in the 1940's and became the Concrete Herald newspaper office, with a second-story apartment that led Herald editor Chuck Dwelley to title his editorial column "Window on Main Street". After a 40-year career in Concrete, Dwelley's book "So They Called the Town Concrete" is a historical tribute to the town and is still reprinted by the Concrete Heritage Museum. The Concrete Herald was discontinued in the 1980's but revived by current editor and publisher Jason K. Miller in 2009.

A more recent fire (2004) took out the last of the pioneer-era wood-frame buildings on the corner of Main Street and Baker. Known for many years as the Log Cabin Tavern, it was replaced with a new wood construction restaurant building. Across the town parking lot, the log walls and balconies of the Cascade Mountain Inn Hotel are a recent architectural renovation of the cement Mount Baker Hotel, built in 1924 as a rooming house for the construction workers who were building the Lower Baker Dam.

Multi-story high poured cement walls distinguish SaviBank (formerly the location of the State Bank of Concrete, established in 1909). The Concrete Theatre (built in 1923, and now on the State Historic

Register) also shows the same type of tall, poured-cement construction. Walls are from ten to twelve inches thick, and extremely sturdy.

Concrete block construction was a new technique developed in the 1940's and included the use of glass block inserts. Main Street's examples from this era include the west addition to Cascade Supply, the Upper Skagit Library (formerly the American Legion Post, completed in 1948), and the business/apartment building just to the east, on the corner of Main and Thompson Avenue.

With its mural facing the east end of Main Street (painted by local artist Don Smith in 2001), the old Fire Department building (1925) is of poured concrete, and originally included a City Council room on the right, a police station with a direct view down Main Street, and a two-cell Jail on the left, with the Fire Hall storing equipment in between. On its roof, spotters watched and waited for enemy planes to fly over during World War II.



The former Peterson Texaco gas station building was a prime fueling location in the classic style of the 1950's, positioned where Main Street intersected Dillard, took a turn to the left and crossed the Baker River.

More elaborate poured concrete construction can be seen in the Zippy phone building across the street on the corner of Main and Dillard. In 1932, this building was first built by the Concrete Eagles Aerie to provide office space for their lodge secretary and physician. It was eventually purchased by the telephone company.

Back to Bear Square, in the center of downtown, the sculpture of The Bear was carved from a 1500-year-old Douglas fir log by local artist Jon Selin in 1980, and mounted here by Museum founder Herb Larsen and his friend Richard Wegers in 1993. The log was donated by Georgia Pacific and transported by Mt. Baker Trucking. A chainsaw sculpture and gazebo at the other side of Bear Square was installed as a memorial to local logger George Nick.

As you continue your walk toward the east end of Main Street, take a moment to locate the "Center of the Known Universe" on the Don Smith mural, then turn left on Dillard for a stroll to the new gazebo at the Thompson Bridge viewpoint. The parks on either side of the Dillard Street gazebo approach were created and landscaped many years ago by local women's clubs. The riverside area is the Upper Skagit Garden Club Park. Across the road on the upper bank, the park area was built by the Cascade Junior Women's Club.

At this point, you can choose to cross the bridge and continue to the Cement City segment of the Walking Tour. Or, retrace your steps across Main Street, go a short way down Dillard Avenue and take a side trip on Hub Alley to visit the Concrete Heritage Museum, one block behind Main Street at 7380 Thompson Avenue. (See a current Museum picture on this brochure's inside back cover.) Founded in 1996 by local volunteers, the Concrete Heritage Museum contains a wealth of memorabilia, photos, and documentation from early Concrete, the cement industry, the creation of the Lower Baker Dam, and the movie "This Boy's Life". Displays showcase an extensive collection of hand logging tools and logging camp items originally acquired by the late Herb Larsen. Herb was the son of Danish pioneers who homesteaded in the Upper Skagit, and he formerly called his collection the "Camp Seven Museum". The Museum is open on Saturday afternoons from Memorial Day through September. At other times, contact a board member. Information is on the back cover of this brochure.

From the Museum, you can return to the Chamber of Commerce via Main Street, and explore the local businesses. Or, you can continue on a loop walk via a right turn on Dillard Avenue and walk toward Highway 20.

Follow the sidewalk as it curves west (right) along Highway 20 and turns toward the Concrete Community Center. After 40 years of political campaigning and construction, the scenic North Cascade Highway (State Route 20) was finally extended over Washington Pass in 1972. Peaking at more than 5000 feet, it is the highest elevation roadway connecting Western and Eastern Washington. Also in 1972, the new Lowell Peterson Bridge over the Baker River was constructed. State Route 20 was relocated to bypass Main Street, the Thompson Bridge, and Concrete's business district, leaving downtown to contemplate a new and quieter future.

As you continue your walk back to the Chamber of Commerce, you will pass the Concrete Community Center building. It was built in the early 1970's as a train depot and final destination for an excursion train that ran from Concrete to Sedro-Woolley. The train was abandoned for financial reasons, but the building continued to be used as a visitor center for North Cascades National Park for several years. Later, Skagit County took over the premises for a Senior Center and community meeting hall. In summer, it is the site of the popular Concrete Saturday Market, featuring produce and crafts from the East County (or as locals call it, "Upriver") area. If the Center is open, stop in and see its interesting collection of historic photographs before you return to the East County Resource Center building across the parking lot.

WALKING TOUR SEGMENT 3. CEMENT CITY NEIGHBORHOOD

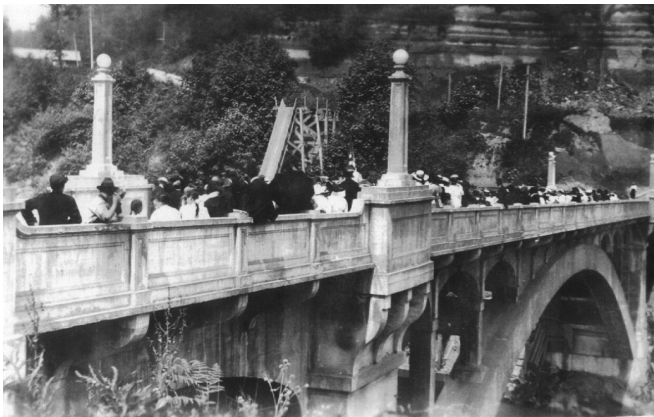


Start Walking Tour #3 at the Thompson Bridge viewpoint on Dillard Street. This segment totals 1.1 miles, across the Bridge, past the Puget Sound Energy facilities and Visitor Center to the end of East Main Street and return. If you explore the interpretive trails at the Visitor Center, add another quarter mile.

The Thompson Bridge is a handsome 200-foot long bridge crossing the Baker River, a structure listed on the National Historic Register. When it was completed in 1918, it was hailed as the longest single-span concrete bridge in the world. The material for its construction was

donated by the two cement plants, and they were "...commended for their generosity and public spiritedness..." by the local newspaper. The first large concrete bridge in the county, it was designed to showcase both the aesthetics and durability of Portland cement.

At the time of the bridge construction, there was no dam on the Baker River, and its free flow carried large amounts of debris and logs during high water, as well as shingle bolts that were floated from upriver logging camps to the Baker River Lumber Company. A previous steel wagon bridge had crossed the river at a lower level, but was not durable enough and had been condemned by the county engineer. This new bridge was located upstream at a narrower spot in the canyon high above the river, anchored in bedrock, and designed to span the gorge in a single arch. J. R. Wood of Seattle contracted the design in



1916, for a bid of \$21,740. Construction took longer than expected due to the complex engineering. At the dedication in 1918, it was named the "Henry Thompson Bridge" in honor of one of the Skagit County Commissioners responsible for the project. Commissioner Thompson was a local pioneer who brought his family from England to a homestead near Birdsview in 1891. He met his end in a tragic train crash in Sedro-Woolley in January 1918, just before the bridge was completed. Memorial plaques on the bridge honor Thompson and the two other Skagit County Commissioners who made the project possible.

State Route 20 originally followed the route of Main Street, through Concrete's business district and across the Thompson Bridge as it headed east. Over the years, the growing volume of traffic and

increasingly heavy and long loads of log trucks took their toll on the bridge as they rounded the sharp corners on each end. Tall light standards which had graced the original structure were knocked off, and the high railings were removed in 1954. Heavy vehicles left holes in the bridge deck, causing the reinforcing metal to deteriorate. In 2000 the Washington State Department of Transportation agreed to replace the upper bridge structure and rehabilitate the historic bridge to match its original design, at a cost of \$1.2 million. One of the original light standards was salvaged from the river, and Puget Sound Energy had a set of duplicates made and installed. The bridge was re-dedicated in 2004. Look for the memorial plaques for contractor Dewey Hyatt, who oversaw the project but was killed in a car crash before the renovations were completed.

Puget Power (renamed Puget Sound Energy) has contributed to conservation of the native Sockeye Salmon run by a series of increasingly elaborate fish passage projects, ever since the Lower Baker Dam was constructed. The current fish transfer facility has undergone frequent renovations. Visitors are welcome to walk out to the viewing platform over the cement holding tanks to see where the salmon are trapped and then transported to Baker Lake by tanker truck, whimsically named the "Fish Taxi". Information on the project is available at the Visitor Center, one quarter mile ahead on East Main Street.



As you walk east on Main Street, think about the amazing pioneer story of Amasa "Peg-Leg" Everett, who staked his homestead claim here on the east bank of the Baker River in 1885. A prospector who had explored for gold and minerals in the Skagit Valley since 1874, he broke his leg on an expedition near Hamilton. Because of the long trek to medical help in Seattle, the leg became infected and had to be amputated. Everett recovered and returned to the Skagit with a wooden prosthesis. Undaunted, he bravely continued to prospect on trips up the Skagit as far as Ruby Creek. An ambitious man, he claimed his homestead, fended off unfriendly natives, cleared the land, married, and raised five children.

Amasa Everett's most important prospecting discoveries, however, were the fine limestone and clay deposits in the hills north of his cabin on the Baker River. Samples were confirmed by assay to be of exceptional quality, and in

1904 he sold his property to New York investors, who promptly embarked on a venture known as the Washington Portland Cement Company, the first cement plant in the area. Everett surveyed the land for the quarry, plant site and housing subdivisions. He named this area "Cement City". It included a railroad depot, hotel, stores, and housing for both management and employees. The name would last until 1909, when Cement City combined with Baker, and the entire area was incorporated as "Concrete". Everett Avenue still bears his name (no connection to the city of Everett, Washington).



By 1906 the Washington plant was complete and in full operation, with miners at the quarry near Everett Lake sending rock down a gravity tramway for processing. Thousands of barrels of cement were shipped out, loaded onto railroad cars. Success continued until 1918, when they lost the bid for the Ballard Locks in Seattle. The Washington plant was bought out by its local competitor, Superior Portland Cement. Their equipment was

dismantled and moved, and many of the employees transferred to the Superior operation. The Cement City railroad depot was also closed. The plant area was taken over by Puget Power, as they planned and later (1924-1925) constructed the Lower Baker Dam. Over the years, Puget Power cleared most of the cement plant area and added their own maintenance structures.

Past the Office, use caution as you walk along East Main Street—there are no sidewalks on this section of road. On your right, you will see structures remaining from the former Washington Cement Plant, the row of giant storage silos where powdered cement was aged and then loaded onto railroad cars. A keen eye can detect the curved grade where the railroad headed east toward Rockport.

In a quarter mile you will reach the W.P.C.Co. Visitor Center. Originally constructed in 1906 as the office for the Washington Portland Cement Company, this building has been recently renovated by Puget Sound Energy and opened to the public in 2022. Elaborate exhibits illustrate local history, starting with the native residents, the Baker River basin, the salmon runs, and the many changes brought about by industrialization and power production. Full of informative displays, this is a place to spend some time both indoors and out exploring the trails and interpretive signage.

After the Visitor Center, continue east, past the intersection of Everett Avenue with East Main. Continue straight ahead on East Main, using the sidewalk to the left. This is the residential area of Cement City, where many of the homes date back to the early 1900's, and were residences for cement plant superintendents, bankers, and other successful professionals of the Concrete community.

In 1909 a hospital was built in Cement City to attend to the inevitable industrial injuries. This was a two-story structure, with medical facilities on the first floor and Dr. E. F. (Ezra) Mertz and his wife, Minnie, a nurse, living above. He frequently was paid in stock from both cement companies, and eventually the couple became one of the town's richest families, remodeling the hospital into a splendid colonial-style mansion in 1929. The Mertz's left no direct heirs, so the mansion and its contents were sold at auction in 1947 and acquired by local newspaper editor Charles Dwelley and his wife. In 1953 Dwelley sold it to the Lutheran Church. The "Shepherd of the Hills" congregation added a sanctuary wing in 1954, and it has been in their care ever since.

East Main Street, the original route of Highway 20, now ends in a turnaround. As you look down to the river, you will see the site of a former ferry landing, where vehicles and foot passengers crossed the Skagit River on wooden ferry boats. (A ferry model is displayed in the Museum; see the photo on the next page.) The dangers of the various Skagit ferry crossings were pointed out frequently to road engineers over the years. However, it was not until 1952 that a steel bridge ("Dalles Bridge") was constructed to the west of town, crossing the Skagit at a narrow point in its canyon, which allowed road access from Concrete to the south side of the Skagit River. This is the end of the Cement City neighborhood, so it's time to retrace your steps to your vehicle.



Dam Viewpoint (0.4 miles, optional side trip). Just east of the Thompson Bridge, the Lake Shannon side road leads up the hill a strenuous quarter mile, past two Puget Sound Energy residences, to a viewpoint above the Baker River. From there you have a striking view of the Lower Baker Dam. Completed for Puget Power in 1925 by the Stone and Webster Company, the dam was elevated to 293 feet in 1927, making it the highest hydroelectric dam in the world at the time, and another tribute to the local cement industry. The original powerhouse below the dam was destroyed by a landslide in 1963. It was then replaced by a new powerhouse with a sloping roof to avoid future damage. The Concrete Heritage Museum has a rare collection of photographs detailing the construction of the Lower Baker Dam.

The white heads of Bald Eagles can frequently be seen in this part of the canyon, especially in winter months.

We hope you have enjoyed your tour!

Model of the Concrete Ferry
at Concrete Heritage Museum.
Donated by Jim Parker, 2009.

The Walking Tour is based on various sources, but primarily on the book *So They Called the Town "Concrete."* This collection of stories was first printed in 1980 by Charles Dwelley, editor of the Concrete Herald newspaper for 40 years. It was reprinted in 2004 by the Concrete Heritage Museum Association, with a preface by Jim Harris. For those who want to learn more about local history, it is a highly enjoyable reference. The book is available for sale at the Museum or in the "Publications" section of the Museum web site.

www.concreteheritagemuseum.org



In 2014, a new book titled *The Story of Kate* by Jean Claybo details the lives of the "telephone ladies" of Concrete, sisters Katherine Quackenbush-Glover and Nellie Grace Quackenbush-Wheelock, whose commercial exploits were most unusual for women in the early 20th century.

Historic photos are reproduced from the Concrete Heritage Museum files, and from the book *So They Called the Town "Concrete."* The Walking Tour text was compiled in 2009 and re-edited in 2013, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2022 by Cheri Cook-Blodgett (with editing assistance from Museum members John Boggs and Jason Miller) for the Concrete Heritage Museum Association.

Cover photos for the 2022 Walking Tour brochure were taken by Cheri Cook-Blodgett in 2022.

Top left: Washington Portland Cement Plant office; Concrete mural on Main Street by Don Smith; Mt. Baker Presbyterian Church;

Bottom left: Superior Portland Cement silos at Silo Park; Bear Square; Thompson Bridge.

Every October since 2009, the Museum and Chamber of Commerce co-sponsor weekend evening "Ghost Walks" that guide visitors into some of Concrete's historic buildings and darker corners, where characters from Concrete's past return to tell their life stories. The Concrete Theatre is the starting point for Ghost Walks. Dates and times can be found on the Chamber web site www.concrete-wa.com. Due to the popularity of these walks, reservations are required and can be made through the Chamber web site.



'Margaret & Henry Thompson' at Ghost Walk



Concrete Heritage Museum from Hub Alley



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We recommend the web site www.VisitSkagitValley.com