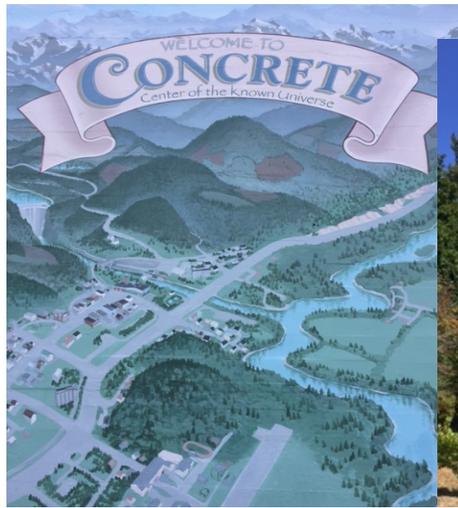


Historic Walking Tour Through the TOWN of CONCRETE 2018



Created by the Concrete Heritage Museum Association
2009

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Explore the Town of Concrete and learn fascinating facts about its history in three Neighborhood Walking Tour segments.

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** (1.8 miles) segment includes the area east of the Baker River, the viewpoint for the Lower Baker Dam, and the Puget Sound Energy Visitor Center. The route can be shortened to 1.1 miles if you start from the Visitor Center and exclude the more strenuous Dam viewpoint (0.5 mile) side trip.

Along the way, you will find information signs for the Concrete Historic Byway driving tour. There are seven numbered sites along this 1.5-mile road route, and the signs will duplicate some of the information in this brochure. However, many photographs and details in the Walking Tour brochure supplement the information on the Byway signs.

START: The **Concrete Chamber of Commerce** is located in the Ted W. Anderson East Skagit County Community Resource Center, at 45770 Main Street. This building was built by Skagit County in 2003, and includes County and Community Action offices. It replaced an older structure that had been built on the site about 1912, first used as a livery stable, and later a gas station and garage. Large timbers supporting the building's covered walkway are clear fir beams salvaged from the old garage.

WALKING TOUR SEGMENT 1: SUPERIOR NEIGHBORHOOD

Start Walking Tour #1 by crossing Main Street to view the sign that was carved in 2008 to celebrate the 2009 Concrete Centennial. (This is Site #3 on the Concrete Historic Byway driving tour route.) 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 all the veterans of Concrete, and the short street connecting Main Street to Highway 20 was renamed in 2011, in honor of Douglas Vose III, a local military hero who is also commemorated by a statue at the current High School's football field.

Veterans Memorial Park (originally named Playground Park) was created in 1910, when the first Concrete Grade School was built, providing a field for the turn-of-the century obsession for 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 early ball leagues. Playground Park has also been the central location for 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.



At Playground Park, on the upper bank to the right, the historic Grade School was destroyed by fire in 2008 and demolished in 2009. In this photo, the left half of the building was completed in 1910, and in 1938 it was enlarged with the addition to the right. From 1990 to 2008 it was under renovation by a private owner, with a third story and turrets added before the fire.

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 directly across 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. In the 1980's the lower floor temporarily housed Herb Larsen's Camp Seven Museum collection, before it was moved to the current location of the Concrete Heritage Museum.

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 and followed the Main Street route west a few hundred yards to the 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 buckets that continuously transported rock from the quarry to the plant. The photo on the right shows one of the wooden towers, and the lines leading to the Superior plant. Nets installed over Main Street protected pedestrians and vehicles from falling rocks and debris. Students in 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.



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,

Continue walking west to the Town Hall and Sheriff's Office (45672 Main St.). Before it became Town Hall, this building housed the local Senior Center and Library. It had originally been constructed in 1908 as the second school building in the community; classes had first been held in a log cabin. The town was growing so rapidly that a much larger cement school was built in 1910 above Playground Park (now named Veterans Memorial Park). This former school building was originally located on Main Street across from the Bank. In the 1930's the building was moved to its current location.



Behind Town Hall are the last vestiges 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 brought in freight and passengers, and returned loaded with wood products (and later, cement) to market all over the rapidly

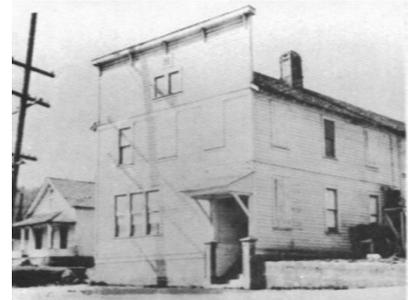
developing West Coast. The depot in the photo was built 1908, near the current site of the Concrete Community Center.

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 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.

Looking to the right, up “C” Street, you will see St. Catherine’s Catholic Church (45603 Limestone) on the hill overlooking town. One of the most photographed churches in the county, this building was completed in 1913. The parish hall across the street was added in 1964. Look farther to the right, and see the Community Bible Church, a cement block building that was completed in the 1950’s. Ambitious walkers can take a short detour up to Limestone Street for a closer look.

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”.

Many of the old wood-frame buildings 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.



On your left, the field and trees you see now were once part of the Superior Portland Cement industrial plant. Continue to follow the sidewalk up Main Street. Across from the old cement office, to your right, 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.

Take a minute to stop at the Power Plant and the Office, the last remaining buildings from the Superior plant. (Site #2 on the Concrete Historic Byway driving tour.) The picture below was taken in the 1930’s.



Imagine – 100 years ago. 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 destined to become one of the largest producers of Portland cement on the West Coast, providing the raw material for roads, bridges, waterways and the mighty hydropower dams on the Baker, Skagit, and Columbia rivers. The first loads of cement were shipped out on the railroad in 1908.

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. 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.

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. This building is slated for demolition in the near future.

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, many 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. 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 capsule was opened in 2009, and its contents are on display at the Concrete Heritage Museum.

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 provided acid to clean the annoying dust off 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. Plant equipment was dismantled between 1970 and 1972. The property was leveled, eventually transferred to the Town of Concrete in 1994 along with the Office building, and is now known as Silo Park. The new Fire and Life Safety Building was constructed and dedicated in 2015.

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 almost overnight around the plant, and in many areas of town.

Turning left at the corner of Main and Superior, 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. As you walk down the hill next to Silo Park, 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, you pass 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. Before the silos were built, the fine powdered cement was loaded into cloth sacks in a packing shed. A Ripley's "Believe It Or Not" column asked the teaser, "What sort of a sack is sewed shut before it is filled?" Cement sacks were sewn across the top, leaving only a small V-shaped valve on one corner. A pointed spout was pushed into this valve and the sack pumped full of cement. When the spout was removed, the valve closed tight from the pressure. Later, specially designed water-tight bulk railroad cars kept the cement dry during transport.

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.

A left turn between the silos and Highway 20 will get you onto the Cascade Trail which follows the old railroad grade. (This is Site #1 of the Concrete Historic Byway road tour route.) To return to your starting point, follow the Cascade Trail ¼ mile, cross Douglas Vose III Way, and return to the Chamber office.

"Welcome to Concrete". This weathered landmark sign is actually a recent addition. It was painted on the silos as part of the 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.

After the cement plant closed in 1969, the railroad tracks were removed from Concrete to Rockport. An attempt was made to continue a passenger excursion train from Sedro-Woolley to Concrete, and a new passenger depot was built at Concrete 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. The railroad corridor was later preserved through the Rails to Trails program for possible future use. In the 1990's, the tracks were dismantled and the right-of-way from Concrete to Sedro-Woolley became the 23-mile long Cascade Trail, currently a level and very scenic hiking, bicycling and horseback route traversing farming and forest areas through the Upper Skagit.

What is Portland Cement?

The name, Portland cement, is derived from the Isle of Portland, England, as it resembles the limestone found there. The process of making Portland cement was first developed in 1824 by an Englishman, Joseph Aspdin. Widely used for roads and buildings in Europe during the 1850's, American engineers became interested in cement in the 1870's, and the first brick cement kilns were built in Pennsylvania in 1874, with rotary kilns developed soon after. With improvements in the technique of using iron for internal reinforcement, the first cement "skyscraper" of 16 stories was built in Chicago in 1902. Inventor Thomas Edison also created homes built of poured, reinforced concrete in 1902. However, most cement was used to build roads and waterways. Around the turn of the century, improvements in engineering allowed more massive structures such as bridges and dams to be built using Portland cement, and this created a greatly increased demand for the product.

The Portland Cement Manufacturing Process

- 1. Quarry and rock crusher.** Deposits of high quality limestone and clay, the basic ingredients, are located in the hills around Concrete. Rock was blasted from the quarry, then crushed into smaller, cobble-sized chunks. Rock was first transported to a storage area at the plant by railroad, then by overhead gondola cars installed in 1926.
- 2. Storage piles and overhead cranes.** Cranes moved the rock into the mill for processing. Large stockpiles kept the plant in continual operation, 24 hours a day.
- 3. Mill.** Big grinders pulverized the rock in gradual stages, into a fine powder. Clay and water were then added to create a wet slurry ("wet process" began in 1918).
- 4. Slurry storage.** The wet mixture was held until a batch was loaded into one of the huge rotary kilns.
- 5. Kilns and smoke stacks.** Steel rotary kilns kept the mixture in motion as it was heated to 2700 degrees. Large stacks created the draft necessary to obtain this high temperature. This process baked the slurry into a rock-like substance called "clinker".
- 6. Coal bin / Dryer / Mill.** Powdered coal was required to create the extremely high temperatures. Chunks of coal were mixed with water, milled into a fine powder, and dried from the residual heat of the kiln. The dry powder coal was then sprayed into a combustion chamber.
- 7. Mill.** The clinker went through a final milling process to create a fine dust: powdered cement. The cement powder could be pumped around like water.
- 8. Storage silos and packing shed.** Cement powder was stored and aged in the large silos. At first, the powder was loaded into individual sacks and piled on flatbed railroad cars for shipment. Later, specially built railroad cars loaded the bulk powder into watertight containers that could be delivered directly to construction sites.

Dry, powdered Portland cement is mixed with sand, gravel and water, and this wet mix is poured into forms, usually around metal reinforcing rods. As the mixture dries and hardens, it forms an internal crystalline structure which results in the rock-hard solid substance we recognize as "concrete". The Concrete Heritage Museum displays a detailed diagram of the manufacturing process.

WALKING TOUR SEGMENT 2: BAKER NEIGHBORHOOD

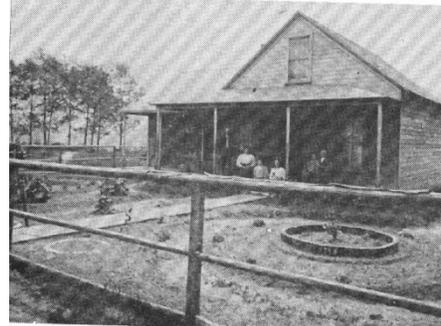
Starting from the Chamber of Commerce, follow Main Street east, up the hill, toward the business district for Walking Tour #2 (0.8 miles). Enjoy the story below as you walk toward Bear Square, in the center of downtown. The bench at the Bear is a good place to stop and observe, as you read about the 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 (from 1948 to 2017 this was the American Legion Hall). Later, as businesses took over Main Street, the house was moved across the alley, where it still stands. 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. A grandson, also named Magnus Miller, remained in Concrete and became a manager of the Superior Cement Company.



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". By 1906 the railroad was hauling out 2,500 barrels of Portland cement per day. 1906 also was the start of land being cleared for a second, competing cement plant to the west of 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 lined both sides of Main Street with small businesses, 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 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.

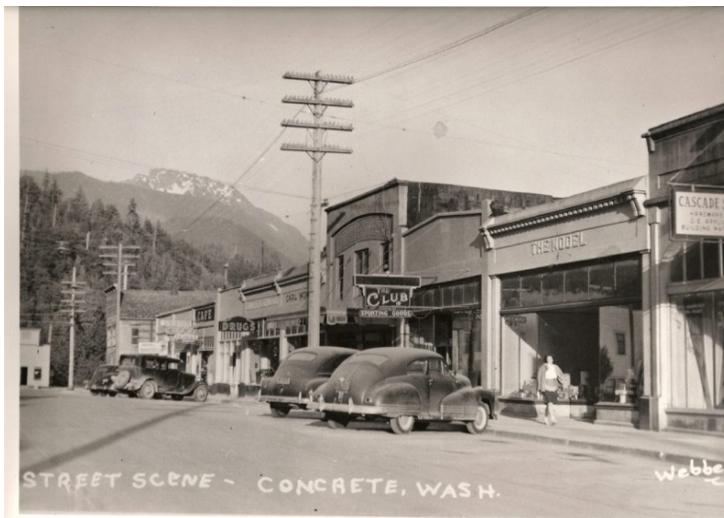
Energized by the growing cement industry, business in the Town of Concrete also continued to grow. 1909 saw the opening of the first bank and the first dentist's office. Magnus Miller's Showhouse (where the town parking lot is now located) was a center for live entertainment ranging from talent shows 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 saloon 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.

During Prohibition, law enforcement officers and "revenuers" were kept busy locating the "moonshine" stills that quietly proliferated back in the woods. On July 10, 1920, two deputy sheriffs discovered a still in the area near the west end of Main Street. It was reputed to be the largest one in eastern Skagit County.

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 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 the Columbia Bank), 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", the Concrete Theatre, and Monrad's Grocery.

Over the years, some buildings have hidden their cement behind decorative fronts. In the 1940's picture above, what was the "Club" is now the Hub Tavern. Farther down the street the 1919 "Café" has become the "Lone Star Restaurant and Watering Hole". This building was recently remodeled after many years as the Eagles Aerie, and is one of the few downtown buildings with a basement. The Lone Star is also renovating the next-door Baker River Trading Post (formerly Monrad's Grocery) as part of their premises.

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 history of the town. The Concrete Liquor Store 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 stucco facing, and second-story apartment that led the Concrete Herald editor Chuck Dwelley to title his editorial column "Window on Main Street". A 1960's fashion "Mirawall" façade along the sidewalk adds architectural detail from another downtown era.

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 former 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 the Columbia Bank (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.

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. (Concrete's Fire Department moved to a new building at Silo Park in 2015.)

More elaborate poured concrete construction can be seen in the Frontier phone building on the corner of Main and Dillard. In 1932, this building was first built by the Concrete Eagles Aerie for their lodge secretary and physician, but 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. (This is Site #4 on the Concrete Historic Byway driving tour route.) A chainsaw sculpture and gazebo at the other side of the parking area 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 and stroll toward the new gazebo at the Thompson Bridge viewpoint. (This is Site #6 on the Concrete Historic Byway driving tour route.)

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. They are currently maintained by the Town of Concrete and local volunteers. The gazebo was recently built by a local Boy Scout troop.

The handsome 200-foot long bridge crossing the Baker River here is 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 Birdsvie in 1891. He met his end in a tragic train crash in Sedro-Woolley in January, 1918, just before the bridge was completed.

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 had been salvaged from the river, and Puget Sound Energy had a set of duplicates made and installed. The bridge was re-dedicated in 2004.

At this point, you can choose to cross the bridge and continue on the Cement City segment of the Walking Tour. Or, retrace your steps across Main Street, go a short way down Dillard Avenue to the sign at Site #5 of the Concrete Historic Byway driving tour route, and take a side trip on Hub Alley to visit the Concrete Heritage Museum, one block behind Main Street at 7380 Thompson Avenue.

Just below the Hub Alley/Dillard intersection, near the bank of the river, is the former site of the Baker River Lumber Company shingle mill, the first industry in the old town of Baker, founded in 1904 by Dan Dillard and R. Roggenstroh. Mr. Dillard was elected the first mayor of Concrete when the town was incorporated in 1909, and the street, Dillard Avenue, bears his name.

Founded in 1996 by local volunteers, the Concrete Heritage Museum contains a wealth of memorabilia, photos, and documentation from early Concrete and the cement industry. It also displays 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 one of the members (current phone numbers are posted on a sign in the window) for a personal tour. Contact information is also 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 (note the deep cut to the right where the railroad grade used to approach the Baker River). Follow the sidewalk as it curves west (right) toward the Concrete Community Center.

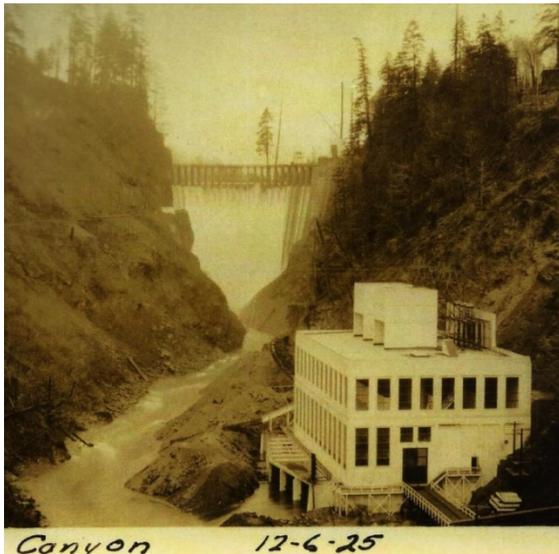
After 40 years of political campaigning and construction, the scenic North Cascade Highway (State Route 20) was finally extended over Washington Pass in 1972. Peaking at more than 5000 feet, it is the highest elevation roadway connecting Western and Eastern Washington. Also in 1972, the new Lowell Peterson 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 Chamber of Commerce building across the parking lot.

WALKING TOUR SEGMENT 3. CEMENT CITY NEIGHBORHOOD

Start Walking Tour #3 either by continuing your walk from the Thompson Bridge viewpoint (1.8 miles, across the Bridge, and including the Dam viewpoint side road), or as a separate excursion beginning at the Puget Sound Energy Visitor Center parking lot. (1.1 miles east on East Main Street and return).

Dam Viewpoint (.5 miles) On the east side 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. As you return down the hill, cross East Main Street and continue east on the sidewalk toward the Fish Viewing Facility and Puget Sound Energy Visitor Center.

Puget Power (renamed Puget Sound Energy) has contributed to conservation of the native Sockeye Salmon run by a series of fish passage projects, ever since the Lower Baker Dam was constructed. The recently renovated fish facility was completed in 2011, and information on the project is available at the nearby Office and Visitor Center on East Main Street. The Visitor Center also has a fine relief map showing the topography of the Baker River Hydroelectric Project, and a wealth of other information.

As you walk east from the Visitor Center, think about the amazing 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 for gold on trips up the Skagit as far as Ruby Creek,

Amasa Everett's most important discoveries, however, were the fine limestone and clay deposits on the hill 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 the town incorporated as Concrete. Everett Avenue still bears his name.(There is 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 added their own maintenance buildings, fish transfer facilities, and in the 1970's built the Office and Visitor Center.

Past the Visitor Center, 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 cement was aged and then loaded onto railroad cars. A keen eye can detect the curved grade where the railroad headed east toward Rockport. The old cement plant office building still stands, with a peaked roof added to the original poured cement structure. It has been variously used by Puget Power as housing, an office, and now a storage location. The building is scheduled for yet another renovation, and will become the new Puget Sound Energy Visitor Center.

You are approaching the intersection of Everett Avenue with East Main, Site # 7 on the Concrete Historic Byway driving tour route. Continue straight ahead on East Main, to the next site of interest. 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. Mertz and his wife, 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 the Dwelleys 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. Many of the other residences in this area originally belonged to plant managers or successful business owners of Concrete.

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 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. 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 was re-issued in a limited "Centennial" edition in 2009, in honor of Concrete's 100th year of incorporation.

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.

Copies of these books may be purchased locally at the Museum. Mail order forms are online at the Museum's website: www.concreteheritagemuseum.org. *So They Called the Town "Concrete"* is also on sale at Albert's Red Apple grocery.

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, and 2017 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 2018 Walking Tour brochure were taken by Cheri Cook-Blodgett in 2017, and include: Washington Portland Cement Plant office and silos; Concrete mural on Main Street by Don Smith; St. Catherine's Catholic Church; the memorial plaque on the Thompson Bridge; Concrete Heritage Museum; and the Safety Statue at the Lone Star Cement Plant Office building.

In October, 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 walks. Dates and times can be found on the Chamber web site www.concrete-wa.com. Due to the increasing 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



CONCRETE HERITAGE MUSEUM

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Memorial Day thru September
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We recommend the web site www.VisitSkagitValley.com