

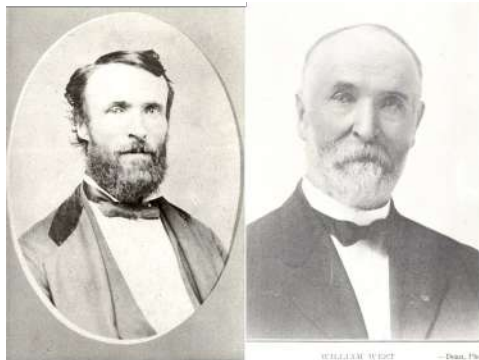
# *HISTORY OF CHEHALIS, WASHINGTON*

The city of Chehalis is located in Lewis County, in southwest Washington. The city is bounded on the north by the city of Centralia, on the west by the Chehalis River, and on the south and east by unincorporated Lewis County. The city lies along the I-5 corridor, and is located at the mid-point between Seattle to the north and Portland, Oregon to the south, both cities being approximately 87 miles from Chehalis.

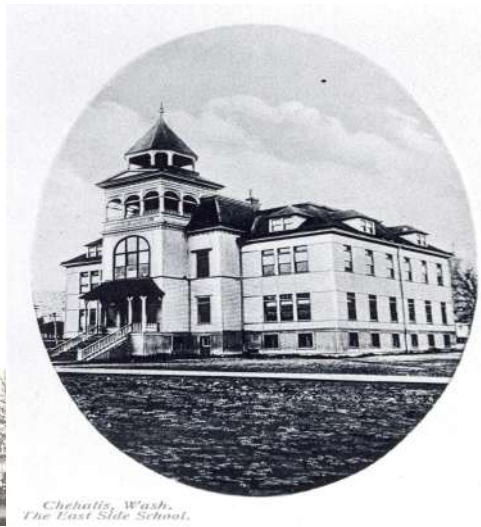
The current corporate city limits includes approximately 6.86 square miles of land. The city's proposed Urban Growth Area (UGA) would add approximately 4.9 square miles.

## Community History

Chehalis's beginnings can be traced back to the summer of 1851. A 640-acre land claim of which is now downtown Chehalis was staked out by the Saunders family. On May 8, 1859 Saunders established the first post office in the community he had named Saundersville. In 1870, the name was changed to "Chehalis," an Indian word meaning "shifting and shining sands." However, the name change was not recognized by the territorial legislature until 1879.



Chehalis became the county seat in 1873, a few years after William F. West persuaded the Northern Pacific Railroad to build through Chehalis instead of Claquato. A new courthouse was built in 1874. The first schoolhouse in Chehalis was built in 1876 at the southwest corner of State and Center Streets; the cost of this building was \$600. A second schoolhouse, the East Side School -- also known as 'The High School,' was opened in 1890. The institution now known as Green Hill School received its first resident in 1892. At that time it was known as the Washington State Reform School.



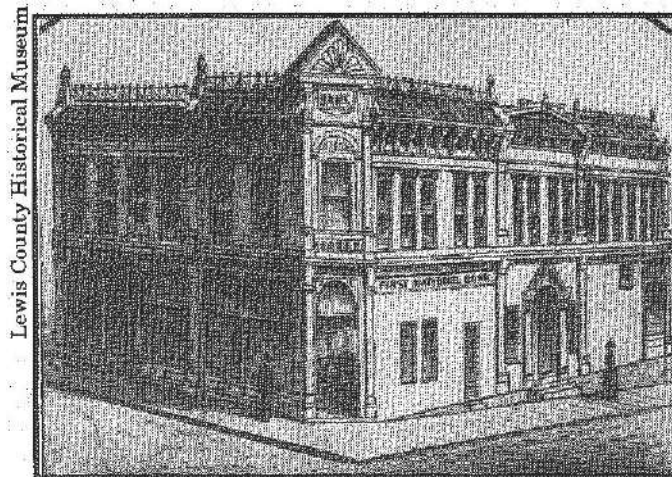
On November 23, 1883, Chehalis was incorporated as a city under the territorial government, which allowed it to elect a mayor and 'common council.' In 1890, the city was incorporated under state government. In 1975 Chehalis voters adopted the city's present council/city manager form of government.





The Second City Center – Chehalis Avenue

Chehalis' first downtown was located on West Main Street because of its proximity to the railroads. The second city center shifted down West Main Street, from the original area, to the corner of Chehalis Avenue and West Main Street. In 1892 two fires destroyed the second city center. The first fire burned one block of buildings and the second fire, only two months later, destroyed four blocks including thirty buildings.



**The First National Bank building, erected in 1889 and razed in 1949.**

The third city center was built along Market Boulevard where new buildings had just been completed a couple of years prior to the fires of 1892. In 1889 the first important commercial structure was built on Market Boulevard, the First National Bank. Between 1880 and 1894 the Chehalis Land and Timber Company, with financing from the First National Bank, constructed the St. Helens Hotel at South Market Boulevard and N.E. Cascade.





St Helen's Hotel



Civic Center



Civic Center



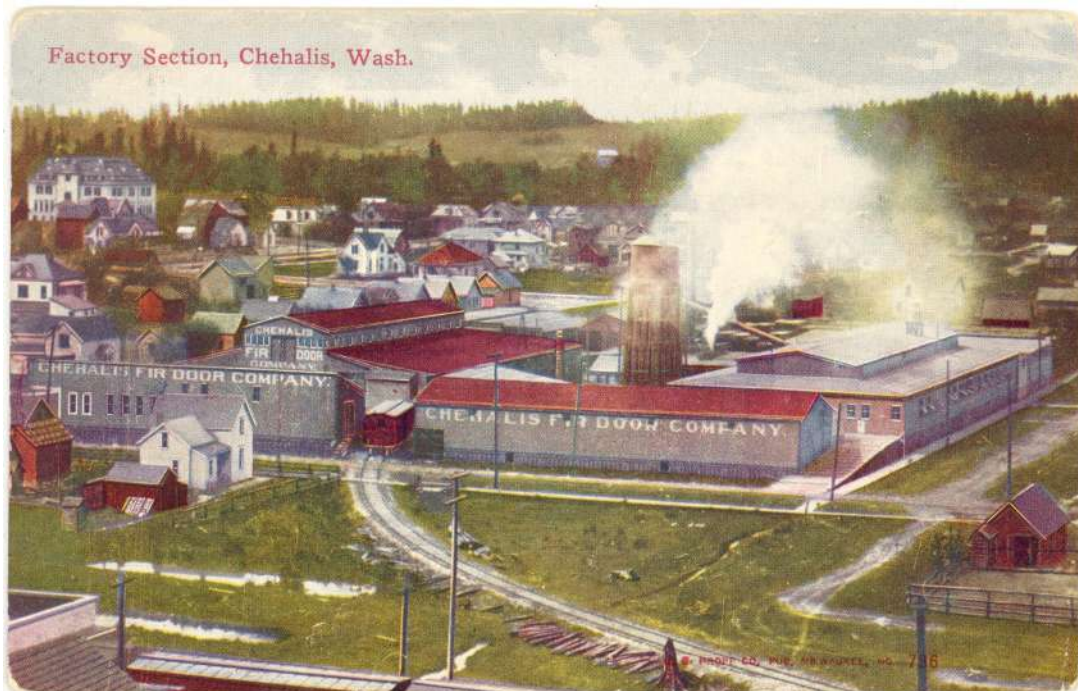
Chehalis Train Depot



Chehalis Train Depot

The original structure was bought by L.J. Sticklin in 1916 and moved to the corner of Market and Division where it became an apartment complex. Owner W.F. West then rebuilt the St. Helens Hotel. In 1910 a new civic center, consisting of the city hall and public library was built at Market Boulevard between Cascade and Park Streets. The Northern Pacific Railroad built its new depot in 1912 at NW Front Way and West Street, which now houses the Lewis County Historical Museum.

The third city center referenced above is today's historic downtown central business district.



Factory Section in Chehalis, Washington

Chehalis got its start as an industrial city very early on with logging, sawmills, and the farming of grain, hay, hops and fruit serving as the major commodities. It continued to grow and prosper, becoming the retail center for the surrounding agricultural area. The city's employment base was diversified into industry, retail service, agriculture, and county government.



The Industrial Commission, formed by Chehalis businessmen, and the Port of Chehalis were established in 1956 and 1986 respectively to help bring industry, thereby jobs, to the Chehalis area. Chehalis' location on Interstate 5, midway between Portland, Oregon, and Seattle, and its link nearby to eastern Washington via Highway 12 over White Pass, is important in attracting new business and industry to the area.

### **Anticipated growth**

The growth of Chehalis, in terms of both population and economy, has been relatively steady over time. This steady growth pattern has meant that the city has grown more slowly during economic booms, and has declined only moderately during economic downturns. Such a pattern is common in areas with a diverse economy, such as Chehalis.

Within the past decade, the average household size has remained relatively constant at 2.47 persons per household

The city has a larger percentage of population over 65 years of age than either the county or the state, which may lead the city to experience special challenges in providing needed services to this older population.

As population has grown at a steady rate over time, so has the city's and the area's economy. The steady rate of growth, avoiding significant economic swings, may be attributed to the diversity of the employment base. The largest sectors of the Chehalis economy are government, wholesale and retail trade, and manufacturing.

Economic growth is a priority for the city. Key players in this effort include the Port of Chehalis, the Chamber of Commerce for Centralia, Chehalis and Greater Lewis County, the Lewis County Economic Development Council, and The Industrial Commission. Due to the limited availability of appropriate sites for new industrial businesses within the city, strategies for economic growth include industrial and commercial expansion within a UGA located to the south of the city.

At the present time the process is on-going to annex Chehalis's large industrial area to the south located within its UGA.

### **Water Distribution Infrastructure**

The North Fork of the Newaukum River is the primary source of water for the City of Chehalis. The Intake is located approximately 17 miles from the city and the watershed encompasses approximately 18 square miles. The Chehalis River by way of pump station provides a secondary water source. The city has water rights and certificates to withdraw 9.26 million gallons of water per day from the North Fork of the Newaukum River and 9.7 million gallons of water per day from the Chehalis River.

The City of Chehalis has six water reservoirs with a total capacity of 6,734,000 gallons. The water is supplied to the distribution system via gravity. The city also operates and maintains six booster pump stations to provide water to the higher elevations and outlying areas.

In the early 1930's the process of replacing the wooden water mains that made up the distribution system was begun. In 1978 the last wooden main was replaced. The entire

water distribution system now consists of ductile iron and cast iron. Main sizes range from 16” on down to 4”.

## Construction

Originally most of Chehalis’ downtown business district comprised of one to three story wood buildings. Most of these buildings were destroyed in a fire that swept through the commercial area in 1892. Reconstruction was in full swing by the end of the 1890’s. Downtown was reconstructed using brick and concrete to reduce the potential for a repeat of the district wide destruction by fire. However, the earthquake damaged many of the brick buildings in 1949. The earthquake damage led to many building “modernization” projects, which resulted in the removal of the external historic characteristics of some of the commercial buildings. Construction of new commercial buildings took place in generally the same location as those businesses that preceded them.



The downtown district was developed practically to its existing size by the late 1920’s and most of the present structures therein were built prior to 1938. The commercial buildings in downtown Chehalis reflect the prevailing architectural styles of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. They are generally Italianate, reflecting the Chicago commercial style, with a number of the older buildings in Queen Anne style, and some of the newer buildings being Mission Revival.

As Chehalis prospered after the turn of the century, there was a boom in construction of all types and sizes of homes, for the most part, on the higher ground around the city center. Of note are the mansion-like homes generally located in the Pennsylvania and Hillside Districts. Most of these homes exist today. They were built in the early 1900’s by the most prominent citizens of the time.

The residential structures vary from basic Millworker to large, neo-colonial estate type homes. Family homes in mission, bungalow, craftsman and vernacular style are interspersed throughout the City. Most of the residential building designs were brought to Chehalis and reflect housing types that were popular throughout the United States in



the period from 1890 through the 1920s. These styles included craftsman, mission, bungalow, Queen Anne, Italianate, colonial, revival, and vernacular.

Due to limited availability of appropriate sites within the city, new home construction has been limited but steady. Mostly consisting of re-models, and infilling some of the less desirable building sites.

Also due to the limited availability of appropriate sites for new industrial business within the city, this type of growth has been limited and minimal for many years.

In 1989 the planning process began for the commercial development of approximately 120 acres of property owned by the Chehalis-Centralia Airport. In 1994 after a number of years of planning and working through the permitting process the major construction began in the area and continues to this day.

This Airport Commercial District consists of several big box retailers, strip mall and a number of commercial pads. Construction is mostly masonry and metal fire restive.

### **Primary Topography**

Within Chehalis's present city limits, as well as its UGA are, there are significant hillside areas to the East. The older sections of these hillside areas generally are significantly steep with very narrow and winding roadways. The newer areas have been built to more modern requirements and codes and do not present as a severe challenge as the older sections. The central and western areas of the city are generally flat to gently sloping.

### **Major Thoroughfares**

Interstate 5 passes through Chehalis within the city limits and the UGA from approximately milepost 72 to 79.5. Presently milepost 76 to 79.5 is within the city limits and the remaining within the city's UGA. Our area of Interstate 5 is the only portion of I-5 to be closed by significant flooding events within the State of Washington occurring in 1991, 1996 and again in 2007. Jackson Highway (County) terminates at the south city limits and turns into Market Blvd. Highway #6 (State) terminates at the western city limits and turns into Main St.

### **Airport**

The Chehalis-Centralia airport is located within the city limits of Chehalis. The airport is home for numerous small aircraft, including some small private jets. No commuter service or heavy air traffic occurs there.

Major development of airport property has been on-going for a number of years and continues today, as well as projected well into the future. A significant commercial/retail area has been developed and much more is in the planning stages.

Major development also took place at the airport, including significant construction of airport facilities and improvements to existing facilities and conditions.

### **Waterways**

The Chehalis River, Newaukum River, Coal Creek, Salzer Creek and the Dillenbaug Creek all pass through Chehalis. As a result during the “rainy season” the greater Chehalis area, including the City of Centralia, is prone to frequent flooding ranging from nuisance floods to major 100-500 year events.

### **Rail Systems**

The main North-South rail line belonging to Union Pacific/Burlington Northern and AMTRAC passes through the heart of Chehalis. This rail line carries all types of cargo from passenger service to hazardous materials. A secondary rail line through the city is primarily used to supply the Chehalis Industrial Park and the Chehalis Port District.





# Eliza Barrett: Forgotten Founder of Chehalis

Photo: Lewis County Historical Museum



**Eliza Barrett, 1826 - 1900**

Eliza Tynan Saunders Barrett is unrecognized today for the pivotal role she played in shaping the urban form of modern Chehalis. The present site of Chehalis is largely located on land once owned by Eliza Barrett and her husband Schuyler Saunders. Following her divorce from Saunders in 1859, Eliza controlled over three hundred acres of land in Chehalis, and for almost forty years her decisions about land speculation and development guided urban growth.

Eliza Tynan was an Irish immigrant to the United States who was working as a waitress in Portland, Oregon when she met and married Schuyler Saunders in 1851. Shortly thereafter, the couple moved to the Chehalis Valley and filed a claim under the Donation Land Claim Act, an early version of the Homestead Act unique to the Pacific Northwest. Following nine years of marriage, in which Schuyler and Eliza had five children, she married three more times. Her second

husband deserted both her and their daughter; a third marriage (in 1865) produced two children and ended in divorce. A fourth marriage to John C. Barrett also ended in divorce, but Eliza chose to keep this husband's last name until her death in 1900 at the age of 74.

Because of her considerable real estate holdings, a number of men, including several husbands, attempted to take advantage of her. It is said that she could neither read nor write, but she must have been a quick learner. Whether out of trepidation after being cheated once too often, or out of well-placed shrewdness about the pattern of urban growth, Eliza Barrett chose to sell and develop her property cautiously. Chehalis promoter William West was one of her many critics. "The growth of Chehalis," he asserted in his memoirs, "was greatly hindered by the reluctance of the owner of the land to lay off a townsite, or to sell any land to anyone else that would do so, only a few blocks being laid off at any one time, so that the population increased very slowly."

Eliza Barrett was in no rush to join the men anxious to make a fast buck in real estate promotion, even as the village evolved around her. She subdivided (or platted) a small parcel in 1875 and five more between 1881 and 1883 -- actions that failed to satisfy local boosters -- but Barrett held her ground. Eventually, between 1888 and 1893, Eliza Barrett sold or platted a total of ten sizable parcels and even decided to develop a couple of lots herself. Significantly, her decisions about land use and civic progress emphasized priorities rather different from the materialistic calculations of city fathers. She chose to construct the first music hall in Chehalis, the Tynan Opera House (1889). She is also credited with the building the first Catholic church (1889) and a Catholic boarding school for girls (1895), municipal contributions that reflected her cultural roots as an Irish-American living in a predominantly Protestant community. Her one purely commercial venture was the construction of the Barrett Block (1891), across Chehalis Avenue from the present county courthouse.