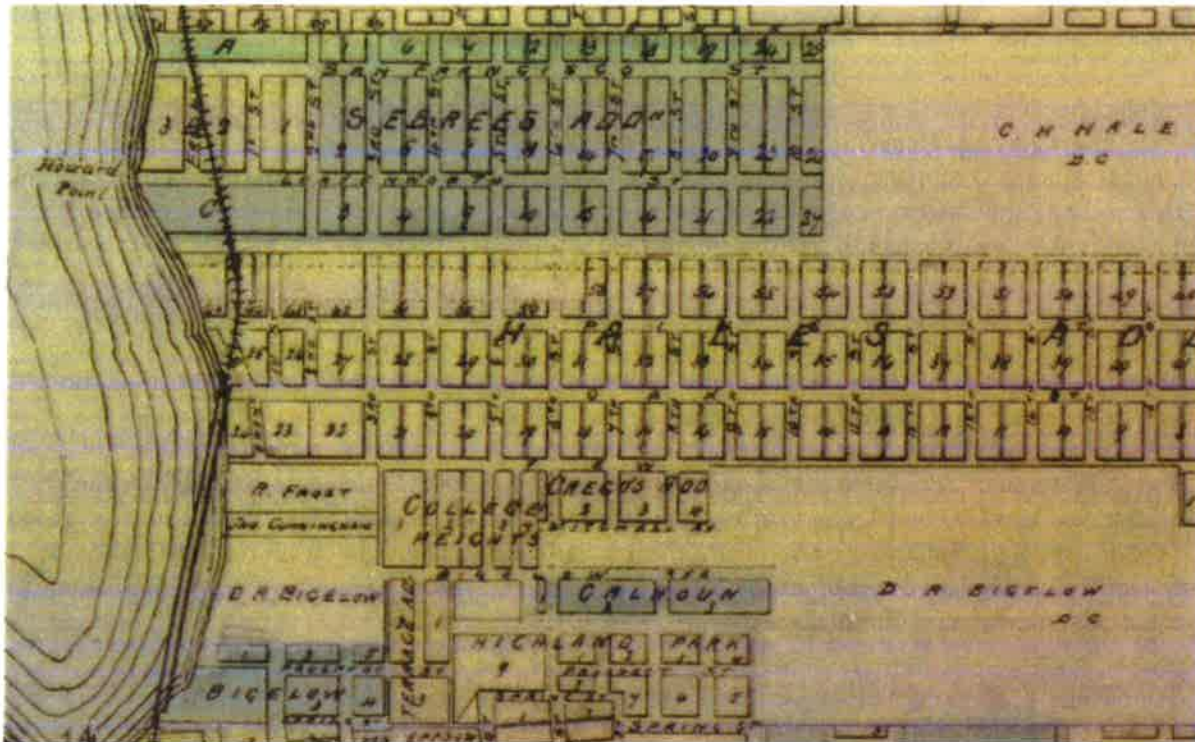


# Howard Point Place Name Project



## Information Packet

### Contents

- Project Summary, and Contact
- Historic Context
- Submission Form: US Board on Geographic Names
- Email: USBGN to Edward Echte, 26 March 2018.
- WA Dept of Natural Resources Hearing – Letter & Agenda, 7 December 2018.
- Supporting Documentation
- Article: Rebecca Howard, by Jennifer Crooks
- Deed: CH Hale to Alexander & Rebecca Howard, 1864
- Brochure: Olympia Area Black Pioneers

Prepared by Edward Echte  
25 October 2018

## Howard Point Place Name Project

### Project Summary

A project begun in 2012 brought together local historians and preservationists to document and interpret the lives and contributions of Olympia area Black pioneers. Collaborators included the Olympia Heritage Commission, The Olympia Historical Society, historians Thelma Jackson, Roger Easton, Edward Echte and others to comb local libraries and archives for information as well as capture living memories of local residents through oral interviews.

The first phase of the project culminated in the publication of a historic walking tour by the City of Olympia and a small but growing collection of oral histories. Since then, the project has continued to gather new materials including deeds, photos, newspaper clippings and more to illuminate the little-known lives of the area's early Black residents.

In 2017, researchers discovered a small point on the eastern shore of Budd Inlet was known to early residents as "Howard Point," named after the Howard family who resided there. While commonly used in the era, this geographic name referencing the pioneer Howard family has never received recognition as an official place name. In February of 2018 it was submitted to the US Bureau of Geographic Names for consideration as an official place name.

On December 7, 2018 the Washington Committee on Geographic Names will review the proposed name and decide whether to recommend inclusion to the US Board of Geographic Names. Local support is key to the process. Please call, email or send letters of support to:

#### **Caleb Maki**

Executive Secretary: WA Committee on Geographic Names  
PO Box 47030  
Olympia, WA 98504-7030  
[caleb.maki@dnr.wa.gov](mailto:caleb.maki@dnr.wa.gov)  
(360) 902-1280

Thank you for your consideration,

Edward Echte  
[echtle.research@outlook.com](mailto:echtle.research@outlook.com)  
(360) 485-2396

### **Howard Point: Historic Context**

Local and regional historians have long recognized the contributions of the Alexander and Rebecca Howard family as prominent citizens of early Olympia. The Howards operated the Pacific House Hotel on what is now Capitol Way from the late 1850s to the 1870s, renowned for its service and hospitality. Rebecca Howard managed the hotel and kitchen, making a reputation for herself as a savvy businesswoman, a fine hostess and avid community booster.

In 1864 the Howards purchased the north half the Calvin H Hale Donation Claim on Olympia's east side and established a fine farm on what became known locally as Howard Point. The Howards also speculated in land, acquiring properties in and around Olympia. In the 1870s, when Olympia vied to become the Northern Pacific Railroad terminus on Puget Sound, the Howards offered to donate part of their land to support the cause.

After the Howards' deaths in the late 1800s, the land was sold and divided. As the area grew, residents used "Howard Point" as a landmark to guide people to the neighborhood and developers featured it on maps. Since that time filling and road construction has made the feature less prominent, and the name was never made official. This project seeks to correct that omission, restoring the Howards' name to the landscape to honor their importance in Olympia's early history.

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## 1. Propose New or Change Name

Name Proposal ID:	9375
Date Created:	14-FEB-18
Date Submitted:	14-FEB-18
Proposed Name:	Howard Point
Action Requested:	Name an unnamed feature
Existing Name:	-
Downward Evidence:	Does not appear in GNIS Database, on current USGS Maps or NOAA Charts
Locally Used:	No
Locally Used Years:	-
Local Conflict:	No
Local Conflict Detail:	-
Additional Details:	-
GNIS Feature ID:	-
Feature Class:	DON'T KNOW
Descriptive Information:	A small point of land on the east shore of the East Bay Channel of Budd Inlet, within the city of Olympia, Thurston County, Washington State.
Meaning or Significance:	Named for the pioneer Alexander and Rebecca Howard family whose home was located here in the 1860s and 1870s. The name was in local use in the 19th century. The Howards were prominent business people and one of the earliest African American families to settle in Washington Territory.
Commemorative:	Yes
Biographical Information:	Rebecca Groundage Howard (1827-1881) and Alexander Howard (1810-1890) were free Black citizens who relocated to Olympia from Massachusetts in the 1850s. The Howards conducted a restaurant and hotel in Olympia Washington in the late 1950s through the 1860s. They also invested in property in Olympia and were strong advocates for the city's development. In the 1870s they donated a significant amount of money to help fund the first railroad in Olympia.
Supporting Materials:	Yes

## 2. Supporting Materials (Uploaded)

Filename	File Comments
Mural.jpg	Mural in Olympia near the site of the Howard's Hotel.
Olympia Area Black Pioneers.pdf	City of Olympia Historical Brochure: Olympia area Black Pioneers- see section "Pacific House Hotel"
1906-2-2 WA Standard.JPG	1906 Washington Standard newspaper article showing the name "Howard Point" in local use.
Crooks - Rebecca Howard.pdf	Article by Jennifer Crooks re: the Howards.
1890 Map of Olympia - Howard Point.JPG	1890 Whitham's real estate map of Olympia, detail view.
1889-7-12 WA Standard.JPG	Washington Standard Newspaper, 12 July 1889 showing Howards lived at the site.
1861-1-17 Puget Sound Herald.JPG	1861 news article lauding Mrs Howard's hotel and restaurant.
1863-10-10 SF Pacific Appeal - Pacific House.JPG	1863 advertisement for the Howard's Pacific House Hotel and Restaurant
1874-3-19 PS Dispatch.JPG	1874 article showing the Howards' support for a railroad to Olympia.

## 3. States and Counties

State Name	County Name
Washington	Thurston

## 4. Geographic Coordinates

Format	Obtained From	Describe Other	Lat Deg	Min	Sec	Long Deg	Min	Sec	Decimal Lat	Decimal Long	Additional Details
DD	Other	Google Maps	-	-	-	-	-	-	47.055546	-122.894300	-

## 5. Administrative Areas

Administrative Area Type	Administrative Area Name	Administrative Area Details
City	Olympia	

## 6. Maps and Documents with Name

Source Type	Source Details	Source Date (yyyy)
Map	Whitham and Page's map of Olympia and surroundings, 1890. Held by the Washington State Digital Archives.	1890

#### 7. Other (Variant) Names and Their Source

No information has been entered.

#### 8. Authorities

Last Name	First Name	Email	Address Street	Address City	Address State	Address Zip	Phone	Occupation	Years
Sadlier	Michelle	msadlier@ci.olympia.wa.us	601 4th Ave E	Olympia	Washington	98501	3607538031	City of Olympia Historic Preservation Officer	5

#### 9. Submitters and/or Preparers

Role in Proposal	Last Name	First Name	Phone	Email	Street	City	State	Zip	Country	Company	Title
BOTH	Echtle	Edward	3604852396	echtle.research@outlook.com	4822 n 8th st	Tacoma	WA	98406	UNITED STATES		

[Accessibility](#)

[FOIA](#)

[Privacy](#)

[Policies and Notices](#)

U.S. Department of the Interior | U.S. Geological Survey

URL: <http://geonames.usgs.gov/pls/gnispublic/f?p=DGNPPublic>

Page Contact Information: Call (703) 648-4552 or email [BGN Manager](#)

Page Last Modified: Wednesday, 13-November-2013



DGNPGUEST

Re: [EXTERNAL] Place Name Submission - Howard Point

BGNEXEC, GS-N-MAC <bgnexec@usgs.gov>

Reply

Did you receive the acknowledgment we sent on March 5th? At that time, we shared your proposal with the Washington Board on Geographic Names; the Executive Secretary of the State Board has informed us he will follow up with you shortly to discuss the State's review process. Presumably that will happen soon.

Thank you for checking in. If you have any other questions, please let us know.

Jennifer Runyon, research staff  
U.S. Board on Geographic Names  
(703) 648-4550

----- Forwarded message -----

From: BGNEXEC, GS-N-MAC <bgnexec@usgs.gov>

Date: Mon, Mar 5, 2016 at 5:43 PM

Subject: Fwd: BGN Proposal #: 9375 Howard Point, Washington

Cc: Louis Yost <lyost@usgs.gov>; "MAKI, CALEB (DNR)" <caleb.maki@dnr.wa.gov>; msadler@cl.olympia.wa.us; Tom Carlson <tcarsl@usgs.gov>

Dear Mr. Echtle,

This acknowledges your proposal to the U.S. Board on Geographic Names to make official the name Howard Point for a point of land ("cape") in the City of Olympia. Our apologies for not responding before now.

The Board is responsible by law for standardizing geographic names for use by the Federal Government, and its members must approve any name before it can appear on Federal maps and products. We will prepare a case brief for the name Howard Point and add it to the Board's next Quarterly Review List for consideration by all interested parties.

Local acceptance of any name is important to the Board, so by a copy of this response, we are forwarding the proposal to the Washington Board on Geographic Names for its review. As part of its research, the State Board will seek input from the governments of the City of Olympia and Thurston County and from other organizations that it determines might have an interest in the matter. The Executive Secretary of the State Board may also contact you directly to discuss the State's review process and to advise whether any additional information is required. Finally, in accordance with Federal policies regarding Tribal consultation, we are required to ask any American Indian tribes with an interest in the area if they wish to comment.

Once our research is complete and all interested parties have had an opportunity to comment, we will present the proposal for Howard Point to the U.S. Board for discussion and a decision. The entire process typically takes several months (the State Board meets just twice a year), but we will notify you in writing as soon as the final decision is rendered.

Thank you for your interest in the geographic names of Washington. If you have any questions, please let us know.

Sincerely,

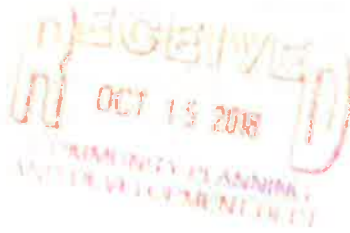
Jennifer Runyon, research staff  
For Lou Yost, Executive Secretary  
U.S. Board on Geographic Names  
U.S. Geological Survey, Geographic Names Office  
523 National Center  
Reston, VA 20192-0523  
Phone/fax: (703) 648-4550 / (703) 648-4549  
[jrunyon@usgs.gov](mailto:jrunyon@usgs.gov) or [BGNEXEC@usgs.gov](mailto:BGNEXEC@usgs.gov)  
<https://geonames.usgs.gov>



DEPARTMENT OF  
NATURAL RESOURCES

COMMITTEE ON GEOGRAPHIC NAMES  
PO Box 47030  
Olympia, WA 98504-7030

360-902-1280  
8006@DNR.WA.GOV  
WWW.DNR.WA.GOV



October 9, 2018

Michelle Sadlier  
601 4th Ave E  
Olympia, WA 98501

Dear Michelle Sadlier,

Your proposal to name **Howard Point** is scheduled for its final hearing before the Washington State Committee on Geographic Names on **12/7/2018** in Olympia.

Proposed names may receive two or more hearings before the Washington State Committee on Geographic Names. Meetings are usually held twice a year. At the first meeting, the Committee decides whether or not to consider the name, and at the second, the Committee makes a decision to approve, deny, or defer the proposed name.

In the intervening months, the Committee staff solicits opinions and comments from historical societies, county officials, federal agencies, mountaineering clubs, and any other group or person who can provide information or an informed opinion on the proposal. The Committee uses this information to make a decision according to guidelines previously established by the Committee.

If there is additional pertinent information (names and addresses of longtime residents, property owners adjacent to the feature, or historical information to help us in our research) beyond what is provided in the Geographic Name Application, please let me know at your earliest convenience.

You are welcome to attend the hearing on your proposal, and will be given an opportunity to make a statement or provide information or clarification at that time. An agenda for the next Committee on Geographic Names meeting will be mailed to you prior to the meeting.

If you have any questions or additional information to convey, please call me at (360) 902-1280, or email me at [caleb.maki@dnr.wa.gov](mailto:caleb.maki@dnr.wa.gov).

Sincerely,

Caleb Maki, Executive Secretary  
Washington Committee on Geographic Names  
PO Box 47030  
Olympia, WA 98504-7030  
(360) 902-1280  
[caleb.maki@dnr.wa.gov](mailto:caleb.maki@dnr.wa.gov)

**Washington State Committee on Geographic Names**

**December 7, 2018**

**11:00am to 12:00pm**

**Department of Natural Resources - Room 172**

**1111 Washington St SE - Olympia WA 98504**

**Agenda**

**A. CALL TO ORDER**

**B. NAMES FOR FINAL CONSIDERATION**

**Clallam County**

**Littleneck Beach - New Name**

**Spokane County**

**Arturdee Creek - New Name**

**Pincroft Peak - New Name**

**Thurston County**

**Howard Point - New Name**

**C. NAMES DEFERRED FOR INITIAL CONSIDERATION**

**Chelan County**

**Nason Bach - Name Change**

**D. NAMES FOR INITIAL CONSIDERATION**

**Chelan County**

**Saddle Rock - Name Change**

**Grays Harbor**

**Traitors Islet - Name Change**

**Kitsap County**

**LeCuyer Creek - New Name**





Rebecca Howard in Massachusetts  
 Courtesy, Howard Family Descendants

**PACIFIC HOTEL AND RESTAURANT,  
 OLYMPIA, W. T.**

The above well known and popular House, having been thoroughly renovated and newly furnished, is now prepared to entertain Guests in greater numbers, and in a more accommodating manner, than can be done by any other House in the place. The House will be conducted on the

**Restaurant Principle.**

Weeks after 4 o'clock, 50 CENTS. An adjoining Cottage has been leased and refitted, where a large number can be accommodated with lodging, good steam bath, and well ventilated rooms.

WE CALL AND ASK YOU TO BELIEVE OF THE TRUTH OF THE ABOVE

BY, **REBECCA HOWARD, Proprietress.**

*Pacific Coast Business Directory, 1867*



Pacific House Hotel, ca 1900  
 -WSHS Photo



Mural at site of Pacific House Hotel, Olympia  
 -Edward Echtle Photo

**A SNAP.—**Fine improved tract, water front, near the Brewery, at Howard's point.

*Washington Standard, 3 January 1890.*

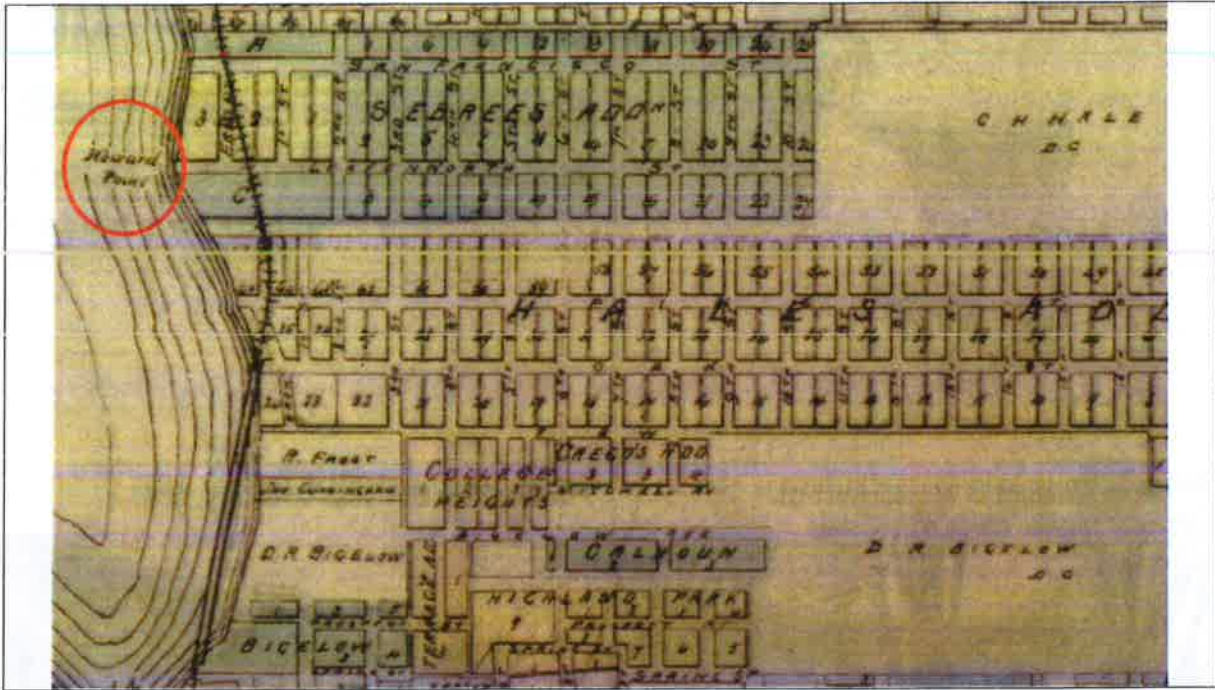
**SALE OF COUNTY PROPERTY.**

The following described real property will be sold by the County Treasurer at the front door of the Court House on Saturday, February 10, 1906, sale beginning at 9 o'clock:

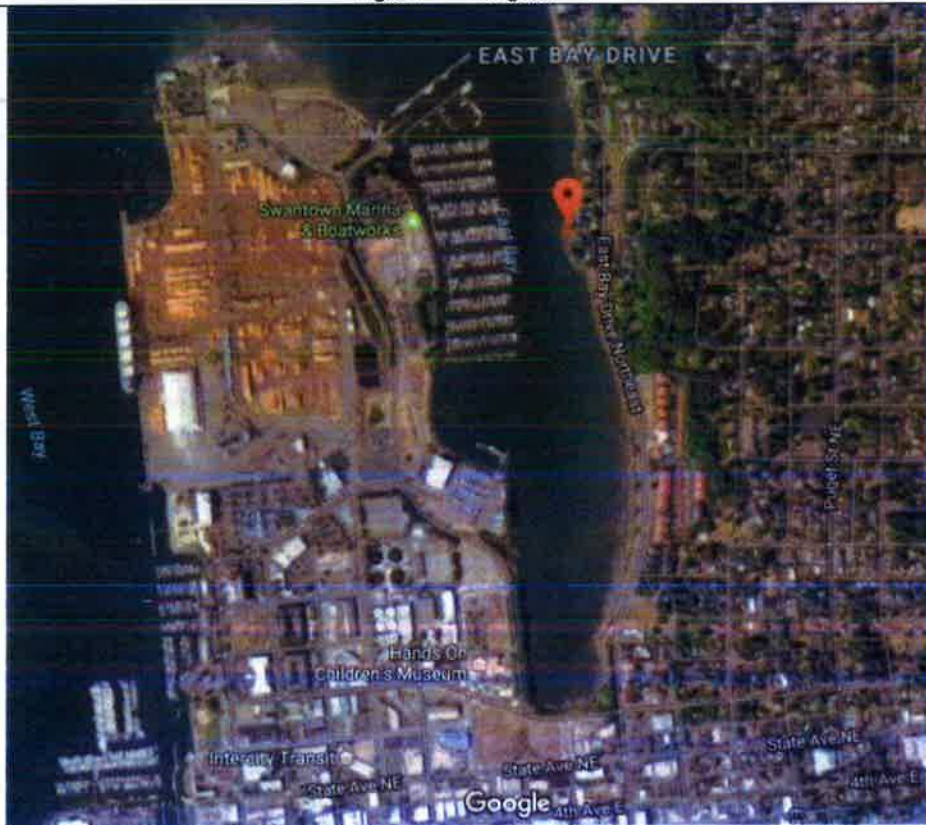
**CITY PROPERTY.**

Application No. 593.—Lots 4, 5 and 6, in block 7, of Sebree's Addition to Olympia, \$32. Sebree's Addition lies about one-half mile north of Fourth and east of Howard Point. The lots here described constitute the east half of the block, each about 45x120 feet.

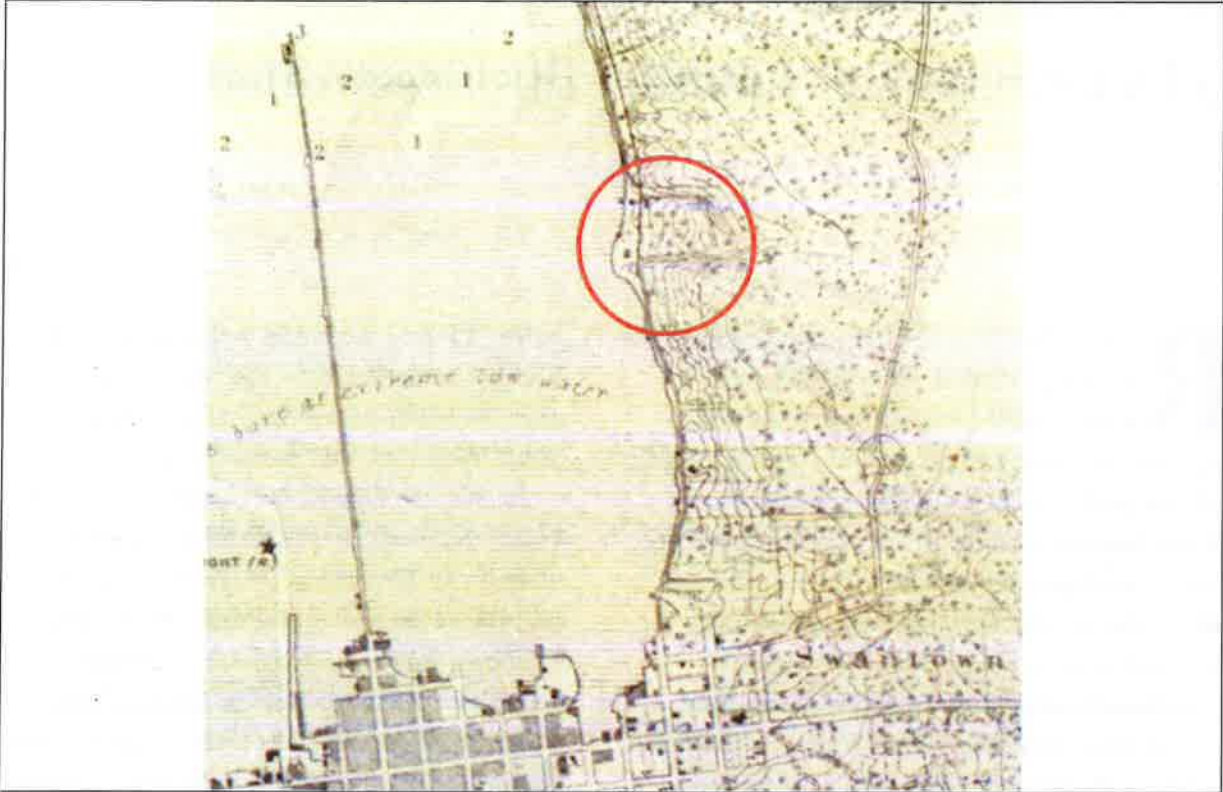
*Washington Standard, 2 February 1906*



**Detail: Whitam's Map of Olympia, 1890**  
Washington State Digital Archives



**Google Maps, 2018**



**Olympia Harbor, 1892**  
US Coast and Geodetic Survey [NOAA]



**Current Parcel Map**  
-Thurston Geodata

# Rebecca Howard: A Determined 19<sup>th</sup> Century Businesswoman

*By Jennifer Crooks*

**R**ebecca Howard is one of the most famous women in Olympia's history. Although information on her is limited, it is clear that she lived an important and interesting life. She was a businesswoman, wife, and mother with a determined character. As an African American woman in the late nineteenth century, Rebecca faced great prejudice and racism. But she was able to overcome this and become a prominent and well-loved citizen in the eyes of many Olympians.

Rebecca H. Groundage was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1827. Alexander Howard, who would later become her husband, was born seven years earlier on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June, possibly in New Bedford, Massachusetts. Both of them were born into free African American families. On November 2, 1843, Alexander Howard

married Rebecca Groundage in New Bedford. The couple would be married for thirty-eight years, until Rebecca's death. Alexander was a cooper, a maker of barrels. The couple remained in New Bedford for a few years.

By 1859, the Howards had moved to Olympia. Few African Americans lived in Washington Territory at the time. On September 9<sup>th</sup>, the *Pioneer and Democrat* newspaper published an advertisement for the Pacific Restaurant (formerly called the Pacific House), the first record of the Howards in Olympia. Their establishment was advertised under Alexander's name: "The proprietor will endeavor to maintain the reputation this establishment has ever sustained since its opening as the BEST HOUSE in town. No effort will be spared to make the stay of parties seeking pleasure here as ably as possible." The Howards also promised "meals at every hour of day or night." Later advertisements were in Rebecca's name.

Col. William Cock originally built the Pacific House in 1854 and added an annex of twenty feet a few years later. Apparently, Mr. and Mrs. Howard leased the House for a while (renaming it the Pacific Restaurant though it was still commonly known as the Pacific House), but owned it by a later date. The building was renovated by 1860. According to the May 16, 1860 issue of the *Pioneer and Democrat*, the hotel promised "good clean beds and well-ventilated rooms." In time, Rebecca's establishment became known as the best place to eat in town. What was served there would be interesting to know.

The Pacific House / Restaurant was located



Located on Third and Main Streets (now State Avenue and Capitol Way), the Pacific House / Restaurant under the management of Rebecca Howard became known as the best place to eat in Olympia. *Courtesy Roger Easton.*

on Third and Main Streets (State Avenue and Capitol Way today). During Rebecca Howard's time at the Pacific House, her establishment was visited by a number of famous people, including General William Tecumseh Sherman, President Rutherford B. Hayes, General Irvin McDowell, and General Winfield Scott.

Although the Howards had no children of their own, they took in the son of Thomas W. Glasgow, a child named Isaac Ingalls Stevens Glasgow after the first Washington Territorial Governor Isaac Stevens. Thomas Glasgow, a Pennsylvania farmer with a bad criminal record, was believed to be abusing his part Native American son who was born on June 25, 1857, in Olympia. When Isaac was almost five years old, Rebecca Howard signed an indenture with his father, taking the son as her ward on these conditions—1. Raise him for sixteen years or until Isaac turned twenty-one, 2. Provide food and clothing, 3. Give him "equal opportunity."

The Howards did all this, and by 1877 they had adopted the boy and renamed him Frank Alexander Howard.

According to the May 1891 *Olympia Tribune Souvenir*, Frank Howard was educated in public schools and in later life "traveled over the United States several times, meeting with many interesting adventures." He married Lillie (Lydia according to the 1890 census) Howard (no relation). The same article noted that Frank was a well respected prominent citizen, owned much property and was a broker at a business on 303 Fourth Street. It concluded that "For the welfare of Olympia, his native place, he is ever ready to lend a helping hand." He later owned the Pacific House. The September 2, 1888 *Puget Sound Weekly Courier* recorded him leasing the building to a "Mr. Willa". Frank eventually sold it to Capt. Hambright as a saloon before it was torn down.

Rebecca Howard died on Sunday, July 10, 1881 of a stroke according to the *Washington Standard* newspaper, which recorded her having suffered paralysis and unconsciousness before her death. On the following Tuesday afternoon her funeral was held at St. John's Episcopal Church of which she was a member. Even John Miller Murphy, noted for his racism, had only kind things



Frank Howard, the adopted son of Rebecca and Alexander Howard, 1891. Courtesy Roger Easton.

to say when she died. He wrote that "she was one of our oldest residents, and had many warm friends." Rebecca was only fifty-four years old when she passed away. Her husband died nine years later. Both Rebecca and Alexander were buried in Tumwater's Masonic Cemetery.

In her will, Rebecca divided her property evenly between her son and husband. The inventory of real and personal property done on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of January 1882 (which can be found in her probate files at Washington State Archives), took twenty-six pages to list everything in every hotel room—for a total worth of \$6, 212.50—quite a large sum for a working woman in those days. Alexander later became a gardener according to an 1888 directory.

Various stories have been told about Rebecca Howard. Some stories related how she was addressed by others. Many people tried to call her "Aunt Becky" which was racially condescending. Rebecca allowed only her close friends to call her that, firmly asserting she was to be addressed as "Mrs. Howard," a title of respect she deserved. The most famous tale about her is when the newly installed Governor Pickering called her "Aunt Becky" she responded that she

was neither the sister of his mother or father.

In December 1862, restaurant patrons J.D. Bagley and M.S. Griswold started a fight regarding the murder of Horace Howe by Benjamin Kendell. Rebecca stopped the fight by grabbing Griswold, lifting him two feet in the air until he lost his fighting urge. "Becky's grip reminded me of an old fashioned locksmith's vice" Griswold later told the *Pacific Herald* newspaper.

The Pacific House was demolished in 1902, considered to be an "eyesore." The *Washington Standard* on September 5<sup>th</sup> commented that the building "with its low ceilings and primitive construction had to pass to the rear under the march of improvement and creation of more modern buildings." This was a great loss to Olympia's heritage. The site of the building is now a parking lot.

Little has been written about Rebecca Howard.

Indeed, she is a woman of some mystery. With further research, more information will be discovered about her life. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century era of racism and sexism, Rebecca Howard was able to create a prosperous business and achieve considerable popularity. These accomplishments, observed the *Washington Standard* article of September 5, 1902, revealed a strong character whose "wit and humor as well as other adaptations for the position of hostess made the Pacific [House] an oasis in the then desert of travel."

**JENNIFER CROOKS is a senior at Olympia High School. Although she mostly writes science-fiction stories, she maintains a strong interest in history and foreign cultures/languages. She hopes to become either a historian or writer in the future.**



Detail from Eli Sheldon Glover's "Bird's Eye View of the City of Olympia, East Olympia and Tumwater, Puget Sound, Washington Territory," 1879. Courtesy City of Olympia.



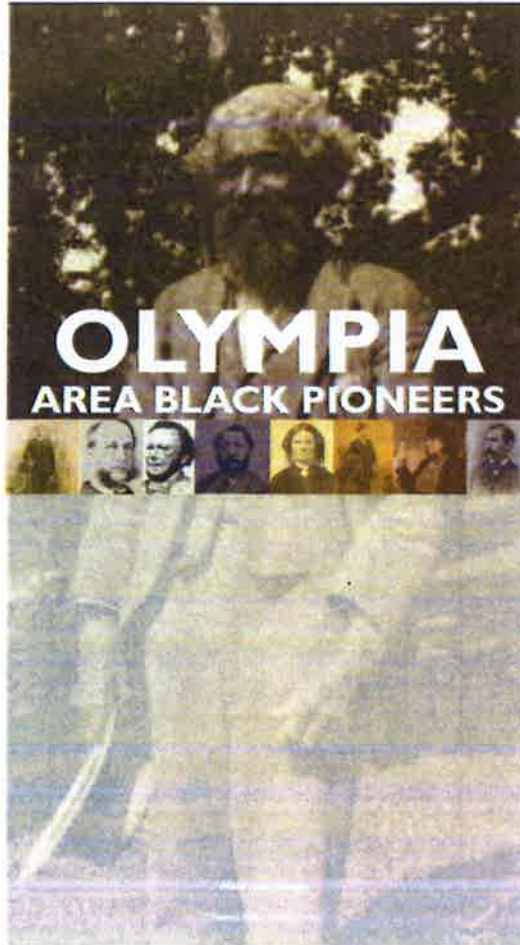




## THE SITES

1. **Wright-Dunbar-Cole Site**  
1000 1st Ave. NW, Olympia, WA
2. **Olympia Historic District**  
1000 1st Ave. NW, Olympia, WA
3. **Wright-Dunbar-Cole Site**  
1000 1st Ave. NW, Olympia, WA
4. **Wright-Dunbar-Cole Site**  
1000 1st Ave. NW, Olympia, WA
5. **Wright-Dunbar-Cole Site**  
1000 1st Ave. NW, Olympia, WA
6. **Wright-Dunbar-Cole Site**  
1000 1st Ave. NW, Olympia, WA
7. **Wright-Dunbar-Cole Site**  
1000 1st Ave. NW, Olympia, WA
8. **Wright-Dunbar-Cole Site**  
1000 1st Ave. NW, Olympia, WA
9. **Wright-Dunbar-Cole Site**  
1000 1st Ave. NW, Olympia, WA
10. **Wright-Dunbar-Cole Site**  
1000 1st Ave. NW, Olympia, WA
11. **Wright-Dunbar-Cole Site**  
1000 1st Ave. NW, Olympia, WA

Site created by 24th 2012  
2012-12-14



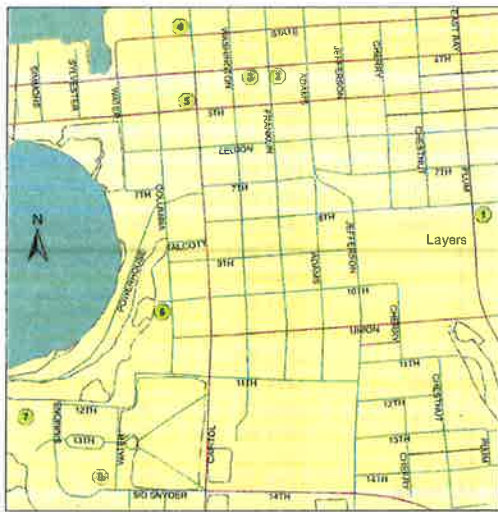
## Blacks in Thurston County Censuses, 1871-1892

Compiled by Roger Easton

Age	Occupation	Census	Birthplace	Married/Single
18	Servant	1871	WT	S
29		1871	MO	M
21		1871	MO	S
34	Barber	1871	VA	S
24		1871	WT	S
34	Barber	1871	VA	S
41		1871	VA	M
22	Steward	1871	PA	S
20		1871	CT	S
52	Hotelier	1871	MA	M
		1871		S
60	Hotelier	1871	MA	M
24	Cook	1871	Mexico	S
21	Cook	1871	Mexico	S
43	Jobber	1871	NY	M
23		1871	MO	M
4		1871	BC	S
2		1871	BC	S
1		1871	BC	S
7		1871	WT	S
37	Cook	1871	TX	S
45		1871	TX	S
37	Cook	1871	BC	S
45		1871	CO	S
33	Farmer	1871	MI	S
39	Laborer	1871	FL	S
19		1873	WT	M
2		1873	WT	S
27	Laborer	1873	WT	S
23	Farmer	1873	WT	S
29	Blacksmith	1873	C.W.	M
47	Barber	1873	VA	S

## AFRICAN AMERICAN LANDMARKS

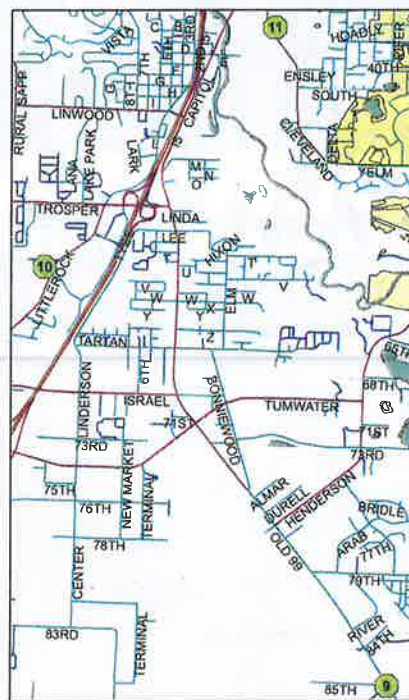
*Olympia, WA*



0 275 550 1,100 1,650 2,200 Feet

*Especially to sites on back cover*

*Tumwater, WA*



## Blacks in Thurston County Censuses, 1871-1892

Compiled by Roger Easton

	Farmer	1873	
19		1873 WT	S
41	Farmer	1873 England	
27	Shoemaker	1873 PA	S
24	Steward	1873 PA	
		1873 PA	
7		1873 BC	S
4		1873 WT	S
23		1873 BC	M
33	Logger	1873 Nova Scotia	S
42	Teamster	1873 Italy	S
2		1873 WT	S
5		1873 WY	S
19	Chopper	1873 OH	S
3		1873 WT	S
5		1873 WT	S
23		1873 BC	M
56		1873 MA	M
45	Hotelier	1873 MA	F
		1873 NY	M
5		1873 WT	S
23		1873 WT	M
7		1873 WT	S
2		1873 WT	S
1		1873 WT	S
3		1873 WT	S
41	Teamster	1873 NY	M
		1873 WT	M
24		1873 WT	M
40		1873 WT	
		1873 WT	S
		1873 WT	S
23	Farmer	1873 WT	M
37	Laborer	1873 BC	S

African Americans have been a part of the diverse population of South Sound since American settlers arrived in 1845. However, records regarding early African Americans in the Olympia area are scant. The fragments of stories that survive offer a window into the daily life of Washington's Capital City and environs. Most came of their own accord, looking for a place to improve their chances for a better life. They worked as laborers, domestic servants, or as stewards on Puget Sound's "Mosquito Fleet" steamboats. Others became business owners, worked as restaurateurs, barbers or bootblacks. Despite their struggles against discrimination, they made their homes here and were an integral part of the social fabric. This brochure will introduce you to some of these people.

Thomas Park, a brick mason by trade, was a lifelong associate of the Robert Frost Family and is buried in



Thomas Park, WSHS Photo

the Frost Family Plot. "Henrietta," domestic servant for Elisha Ferry who later became governor of Washington, only appears once in Olympia's census. Leander Bushon's apparent business success beyond Olympia after apprenticing in Samuel Stork's mercantile remains to be researched. The women of color identified as prostitutes in the census disappear as abruptly as they appear in local records. Yet all of their stories show the South Sound's population is more complex and interconnected than many early histories indicate.

While few structures associated with their lives survive, the stories connected to these sites reflect the diversity of experiences that make up African American history in Olympia and the Pacific Northwest.

In some cases first names are used to avoid confusion with relatives of the same last name.



Unknown man, Private Collection

**1. Former Olympia City Hall**  
 Southeast corner Plum St & 8th Ave



*Olympia City Council, 1988, Jet Magazine Image*

This modern-style building housed Olympia's city government from 1966 to 2010. In 1988 Olympia voters helped make history when they elected local community organizer Cora Pinson to the City Council, the first African American woman to hold such a position in Washington State. Pinson served on the Olympia City Council from 1987 to 1991.

Pinson was born in Memphis Tennessee and graduated from Hammond Business College in Indiana. Afterwards she operated a modeling agency in Chicago until a friend convinced her to come west in 1975.



*Cora Pinson swearing in, 1988, Jet Magazine Image*

Active in numerous community groups and government agencies, Pinson served on the Olympia Downtown Revitalization Committee and was an active member of the Olympia Kiwanis. She also served on the Department of Social and Health Service's Advisory Committee and in the Housing Authority of Thurston Co., the Thurston Co Economic Development Council and the Visitor and Convention Bureau. She was also a founding member of the New Life Baptist Church in Olympia.

Pinson's political activities included serving with the National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials, as Precinct officer for the Thurston County Democratic Party and as president of the Northwest Conference of Black Elected Officials.

Among her outreach efforts Pinson hosted a local radio show where she discussed racial diversity and worked to uncover and preserve the history of African Americans in Thurston County.

Cora Pinson died in 1994 at age 53. Her passing prompted the Washington State Senate to pass SR8663 honoring her countless hours of community service.

**2. Our House Restaurant**  
 (Site only, building demolished)  
 Southeast corner Franklin St & Fourth Ave



*"Our House Restaurant," (left)  
 City of Olympia Collection*

The James and Mary Mars family arrived in Olympia from Victoria BC in 1870. James left Massachusetts as a young man and worked at sea until he joined the 1849 California Gold Rush. Afterward he relocated to Victoria where he worked as crew on Puget Sound steamboats. Mary Thompson was born in Missouri and arrived in Portland, Oregon in 1852. She moved to Victoria in 1860 where she met James; they married later that year.



*James Mars,  
 Roger Easton  
 Collection,  
 Olympia Tribune  
 Souvenir Edition  
 1891, the State  
 Library collection*

After their arrival in Olympia, James worked as a laborer. In 1879 they opened the "Our House Restaurant" at this location, offering reasonably priced meals prepared, as the press described, in ways that "remind one of home and mother's cooking." The Mars family was renowned for their hospitality and were well respected citizens of Olympia.

**Mars James, restaurant, s e cor 4th and Franklin.**

*Palk's Puget Sound Directory, 1887*

James and Mary had four children. Their eldest son, James Mars Jr, passed away in 1886. In 1891 illness struck the Mars family; James and son Jesse passed away; Mary followed in 1892. Their funerals were widely attended by Olympia residents. Their daughters, Ella and Lizzie, moved to Spokane to live with relatives.

### 3. Columbia Hall

**(Site only, building demolished)**

North Side Fourth Ave  
between Washington St &  
Franklin St



*Columbia Engine Co. #1 ca 1880s, Jesse Mars, (center), WSHS Photo*

Olympia's first city hall, built in 1869, also housed the Columbia Engine Company No. 1, Olympia's volunteer firefighting organization. In 1883 the firefighters elected thirteen year-old Jesse Mars, son of James and Mary Mars, as a member of the department. Jesse is the earliest known African American to serve as a firefighter in Olympia.

Jesse was a member of the fire department until his death from illness in 1891 at the age of 22. In his honor, Columbia

Engine Co handled his funeral arrangements and passed a resolution of respect for his service in the department. He is interred at Odd Fellows Cemetery, Tumwater with his family.



*Columbia Engine Co, 1880s, Jesse Mars 3rd from R, City of Olympia Collection*

### 4. Pacific House Hotel

**(Site only, building demolished)**

Northeast corner Capital  
Way & State Ave



*Pacific House, shortly before demolition, Roger Easton Collection*

Built in the 1850s as Olympia's premiere hotel, by 1859 the Pacific House was operated by Alexander and Rebecca Howard who came west from Massachusetts. Under the Howard's leadership, the Pacific House achieved fame as a fine, well-run establishment comparable with



*Rebecca Groundage Howard, Private Collection*

restaurants and hotels in San Francisco. Rebecca's reputation as a successful, no-nonsense businesswoman commanded respect and empowered her to admonish anyone, even legislators, who dared call her "Aunt Becky" without her permission.

In its heyday the Pacific House served as the informal headquarters of the Republican Party during legislative sessions. In 1880, President Rutherford B Hayes visited Olympia and addressed a crowd from its second story balcony.

In 1862 the Howards agreed to take custody of six-year-old Isaac Glasgow, rescued by a group of concerned local women from a life of abuse from his father. The Howards renamed him Frank and later adopted him as their son. Frank became a businessman in his own right with interests in Olympia, Seattle and on the east coast.



Frank Howard, Olympia Tribune Souvenir Edition, 1891. Washington State Library.

The Howards retired to a small farm on Olympia's east side after accumulating a modest fortune from business investments. [See Site #11 Cemetery]



The door to Rebecca Howard's Safe

## 5. Bill Williams' Bootblack Stand (Site only, building demolished) Southwest corner Capital Way & Fifth Ave



Odd Fellows Hall at Capital Way and 5th Ave, Washington State Library Collection

After a life of adventure and hardship, Bill Williams settled down in Olympia in the 1880s and operated a bootblack stand in his final years. Originally located in front of Young's Hotel at Capitol Way and Olympia Ave, he later moved to this site. In an 1893 interview, the press described Williams as a large gregarious man with long white hair, whose pipe was his "constant companion."

Born in Baltimore in 1820, he went to California by sea for the 1849 Gold Rush. However, his successful mining operation attracted the attention of bandits who robbed him of his gold. Afterwards he worked as a cook on coastal steamships. He later joined the Hudson's Bay Co in northeast Washington and British Columbia until he again followed new gold rushes on the Fraser River and the Caribou in the late 1850s.

Williams opened a restaurant while in British Columbia. He became friends with steamboat captain Woodbury Doane who was a frequent customer. Doane later became a successful restaurateur in Olympia and may have convinced Williams to relocate here as well. As Williams' health declined, he took up boot-blackening for a living and became a well-known part of the Olympia community.

Williams' years among the diverse populations of miners, fur trappers and natives made him fluent in Spanish, French and German as well as English. He could also converse with natives in the Chinook Jargon trade language. Among his longtime friends was Jim Daugherty who became wealthy in the Yukon Gold Rush. Daugherty provided Williams with a trust fund, allowing Williams to spend his final years in relative comfort, operating his stand as a place to socialize more than as a business.

## 6. Tilton House

**(Site only, building demolished)**

Southwest corner Columbia St and 10th Ave



Tilton House, 1860s, WSHS Collection

Eight-year-old Charley Mitchell came west to Olympia in 1855 as a domestic servant with the family of James Tilton, the first Surveyor General of Washington Territory. Mitchell's mother was a slave owned by Tilton's cousin and his father was a white oyster farmer. Tilton assumed responsibility for Mitchell after his cousin passed away.

In September of 1860 Black stewards working aboard Puget Sound steamboats convinced Mitchell to stow away on the steamer *Eliza Anderson* bound for British Columbia. There he could join the community of free Blacks living in Victoria. The British Empire outlawed slavery after 1834 and many Blacks who came west made their way to Victoria to escape the contentious and rapidly changing laws in the US.



Steamer Eliza Anderson at Victoria BC, Dryden's Marine History, p76

While underway Captain Fleming discovered Mitchell and placed him under arrest, intending to return him to the Tiltons. However, protestors in Victoria filed a writ of *Habeas Corpus* and authorities took Mitchell into custody. The next day the courts granted him his freedom.

While the Tiltons insisted Mitchell was not a slave, the 1857 Dred Scott Supreme Court Decision held slaves were constitutionally protected private property unless states voted to ban slavery, which Washington had not done. For their part, the Tiltons masked their indignation at Charley's leaving through derision, commenting in the press that, "his services have lately not been equivalent to his expenses."

After Mitchell won his freedom he joined the free Black community in British Columbia, but his life afterwards remains largely unknown. In 1876 a "colored man" named Charley Mitchell left Sooke in a canoe but was drowned when bad weather set in.

## 7. Quincy-Campbell Home

**(Site only, building demolished)**

Capital Campus, west end of the Temple of Justice

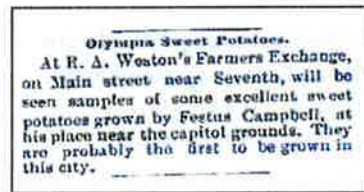
Before construction of the current capitol complex in the 1920s, this area was a residential neighborhood. Festus Campbell and Mary Quincy, lifelong companions who relocated from Massachusetts to Olympia together in the 1870s, kept house and maintained a showcase garden at this site.



Festus Campbell,  
First Baptist  
Church,  
Pittsfield Mass.

Festus Campbell began life as a slave in Louisiana but escaped to Massachusetts by the 1850s. He found work as a servant for Dr. Robert Campbell in Pittsfield, Massachusetts and adopted the family name. Campbell travelled throughout Europe with the family where he mastered French, Spanish and other languages. As an adult he became an ordained Baptist minister and opened multiple restaurants in Pittsfield. Campbell also operated a successful greenhouse and invested in real estate.

In the 1860s he hired Mary Quincy to manage one of his restaurants while he travelled for business and to preach the gospel. However, by the 1870s Campbell's business ventures were in decline. When Rebecca Howard recruited Quincy to work at the Pacific House Hotel, they relocated to Olympia. After their arrival, Quincy continued working as a cook and domestic while Campbell applied his extensive knowledge of horticulture to grow flowers, fruits and vegetables for sale and assist others with their gardens. He also served briefly as a minister at the Olympia First Baptist Church.



Morning Olympian, 29 October 1893

Campbell was well-read and kept an extensive personal library in their home. He was an occasional speaker to the Thurston County Horticultural Society

and in 1909 won a medal for his produce at the Seattle Alaska Yukon Pacific Exposition World Fair.

Although not married, they lived together until their deaths; Quincy in 1909 and Campbell in 1910. Their obituaries describe their long relationship as close but platonic.

## 8. Territorial Capitol Building (Site only, building demolished)

Southeast corner  
Legislative Building



Territorial Capitol Building.  
Washington State Digital Archives

Built in 1855 to house the territorial legislature, the territorial capital also served as the first state capitol briefly after 1889. Among the legislators elected to the first state legislature in 1889 was William Owen Bush, pioneer agriculturalist, representing Thurston County.



William Owen  
Bush, WSHS  
Collection

William was born in Missouri in 1832, the eldest son of George and Isabella Bush. [See Bush Homestead, Site #9] At age 17 he travelled to California for the 1849 Gold Rush but returned shortly after. William married Mandana Smith Kimsey and together they farmed the Bush family claim after his parents passed away in the





*Bush Homestead on Bush Prairie,  
Henderson House Museum Collection*

1860s. Their farm became a model of agricultural excellence and a showcase for good farming practices. In 1872 William helped establish the Western Washington Industrial Association to promote agricultural exhibitions of local products. At the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876 the Bushes wheat won "best in the world" and the display became a permanent exhibit at the Smithsonian in Washington DC.

During his term in the state legislature, William helped establish an agricultural college, now Washington State University in Pullman, Washington. In 1892 William took Thurston County produce to the Chicago World Fair where it once again won many awards.

After a lifetime of hard work and achievement, Mandana Bush passed away in 1899; William followed in 1907. They are buried near George and Isabella Bush in the Tumwater Union Pioneer Cemetery.



*1855 Map of Bush Family Farm,  
WA State Historical Society*

## 9. George and Isabella Bush Homestead (Site only, building demolished) Intersection 88th Ave and Old Highway 99, Tumwater



*Bush House, 1970, Olympia Historical Society,  
Roger Easton Collection*

George and Isabella Bush arrived on Puget Sound in 1845 as part of the first group of American settlers. George was born about 1790 and was mixed race. He served in the war of 1812 and later may have traveled west and worked as a fur trapper. He returned east and became an expert cattle rancher and farmer. In 1832 he married Isabella James, a white woman. Together they built a prosperous farm in Missouri where they raised several children.



*George Bush,  
an artist's  
rendering,  
no known  
photographs exist,  
WA State Archives*

In 1844 the Bush family came west by wagon to Oregon Territory with a group of friends including Michael Simmons. When they arrived they found laws barring settlement by non-whites already in place. Unwilling to separate, the group chose to move north of the Columbia River where Oregon laws didn't yet apply. The group settled near Tumwater Falls; the Bushes staked a claim to the south, on what is still known as Bush Prairie.

The Bush family's farming expertise played a critical role in the community's survival in the early years and their home became a stopping place on the trail to Puget Sound. By 1850 the Bushes had over 100 horses, cattle, sheep and pigs and 10 oxen which they generously shared with struggling neighbors.

After congress extended Oregon Territory north of the Columbia in 1848, George's title to his claim was in question. In response, 55 of their neighbors and friends petitioned congress to grant them title to their farm; congress passed the legislation in 1855. Later, during the conflict over treaty provisions between natives and white settlers in 1855-56, the Bush homestead was "neutral ground" due to the family's good relations with natives. After George and Isabella's deaths in the 1860s the farm remained in the family for many years and became a showcase for good farming practices. [See Territorial Capitol Building, site #8.]



*Bush House, late 1800s, Olympia Historical Society, Roger Easton Collection*

## 10. Union Pioneer Cemetery

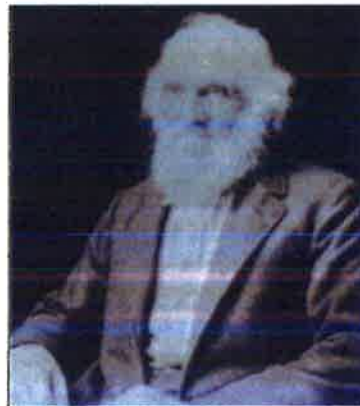
5700 Littlerock Rd,  
Tumwater



*George and Isabella Bush Marker, Edward Echtle Photo*

Established in the early 1850s on Jesse Ferguson's land claim, Union Pioneer Cemetery is one of the first American cemeteries in Washington State. Many of the earliest settlers in this area are buried here, including pioneers George and Isabella Bush, along with many of their descendants. [See site #9.]

Over the years Union Cemetery suffered from the effects of neglect and vandalism. In the 1970s the site was in disrepair when the Thurston County Black Women's Caucus restored George and Isabella's marker as a historic site. In 1977 the City of Tumwater assumed ownership and still maintains the cemetery.



*H Sanford Bush, (1840-1913) son of George and Isabella, Olympia Historical Society, Roger Easton Collection*

## **11. Masonic and IOOF Cemeteries**

3802 Cleveland Ave SE,  
Tumwater



*Festus Campbell Marker, Edward Echtle Photo*

The entrance road to the Odd Fellows Cemetery from Cleveland Ave is the dividing line between the Masonic and Odd Fellows Cemeteries. Masonic cemetery was founded in 1859 and IOOF in 1869.

A number of Black pioneers are buried on either side of the road dividing the cemeteries. Rebecca and Alexander Howard, Festus Campbell and Mary Quincy are in Masonic Cemetery. Thomas Park lies nearby with the Robert Frost Family in an unmarked grave.

Bootblack William "Bill" Williams and barber Isaac Dixon lie in adjoining plots just south in IOOF Cemetery while laborer Nathaniel Willis is in an unmarked plot in Block 51.

Record keeping in the early days was inconsistent and a number of burial locations remain unknown. Obituaries place the Mars Family in the IOOF Cemetery while "Lizzie" Golden, a brothel owner who died in 1902, was buried in Masonic. It may be they were buried at county expense and the names of those interred went unrecorded.

### **Masonic Memorial Park**

Festus Campbell (1822-1910)

Mary Quincy (1909)

*Block 55, Row 30*

Thomas Park (1916)

*Block 51, Row 11*

Rebecca Groundage Howard (1827-1881)

Alexander Howard (1810-1890)

*Block 61, Row 16*

"Lizzie" Golden (1902)

*Location unknown*

### **Odd Fellows Cemetery**

Isaac Dixon (1873)

*Block 31 lot 30*

William "Bill" Williams (1820-1898)

*Block 30 lot 32*

Nathaniel Willis (1911)

*Block 151 lot 18 [no marker]*

James Mars (1828-1891)

Mary Thomas Mars (1848-1892)

Jesse Mars (1891)

*Locations unknown*



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For more information on Olympia's heritage visit [olympiawa.gov/historic](http://olympiawa.gov/historic) or call phone: 360.753.8314

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