

A TIMELINE OF EVENTS IN THE UPPER SKAGIT

We tend to develop a natural connection to places in the wild Upper Skagit. Place is also about history and the people who came before us and their relationship to the land. The chronology below is offered here as means to place Upper Skagit peoples, past and present, within a timeline of natural and cultural events, so that we may better consider our own relationships with the land.

SOME PRE-CONTACT PERIOD EVENTS (DATED IN YEARS BEFORE PRESENT BY RADIOCARBON TECHNIQUE)

- 24–18,000** A glacial lake occupies the valley where today's Ross Lake now exists.
- 14,500** The large Cordilleran Ice Sheet that covers the northern half of today's Washington, including the North Cascades (and Seattle and Puget Sound as far south as Centralia), begins to melt away.
- CA. 11,000** The ice age elephants (mammoths and mastodons) and Bison, prior to this time fairly abundant in many parts of the unglaciated Pacific Northwest, have become extinct.
- +9000** Earliest evidence of people in the high elevations of Washington State & B.C. & the N. Cascades interior at Cascade Pass, & of the use of Hozomeen chert (a variety of quartz rock similar to flint, used to make tools).
- 8400** Native people begin a long tradition in the Upper Skagit to quarry Hozomeen chert; parts of Jack, Desolation, & Hozomeen mountain are made of these ancient sea-floor rocks; Hozomeen chert use begins to spread beyond the local source areas.
- 6000** Cooler moister climate begins, widespread economic shift to more intensive use of local resources, more complex and diverse technologies, along with more permanent villages.
- 3800** Largest known eruption of Mt. St. Helens deposits 2 in thick layer of yellow, sandy volcanic ash ("Y") across widespread areas of the Pacific Northwest, including the Ross Lake area.
- 2000** Widespread and recurrent use of the upper Skagit floodplain and valley landforms as base camps for hunting and gathering expeditions (mountain goats, deer, beaver, food & medicinal plants).
- 1,400** At Newhalem, under a large boulder, Indian people cooked and preserve mountain goat, bear, and other animals hunted in the surrounding mountains.
- 660** At an important fishery and canoe pull-out, Skagit Indian people dry and smoke salmon along the river near the mouth of today's Goodell Creek.
- 300??** Old World diseases first introduced, with devastating effects to American Indian populations.

CALENDAR DATES (A.D.) OF PEOPLE AND EVENTS IN RECORDED HISTORY IN THE ROSS LAKE VICINITY

- 1730** Indian people of E. Washington acquire horses from Great Basin Indian bands; horses introduced to North American by Spanish explorers in the southwest in the 1500s.
- 1778** Captain Cook's third voyage arrives in the San Juan Islands.
- 1804 (Aug. 12)** Lewis and Clark are first Americans to describe seeing a coyote (lower Missouri River).
- 1814** Alexander Ross makes the first documented (and extremely uncomfortable) crossing of the North Cascades by a non-Indian, over Cascade Pass.
- 1827** Ft. Langley, a Hudson's Bay Co. trading post, is established on the lower Fraser River.
- 1850** The Little Ice Age, a period of alpine glacier growth, ends.
- 1853–1855** Isaac Stevens, territorial governor, signs series of treaties with Indian bands and tribes in W. Washington.
- Aug. 1859** Henry Custer begins canoe trip down the Skagit River from Hozomeen to mouth of Ruby Creek.
- 1861** The U.S. Civil War begins.
- 1870** The first non-Indian inland settlement on the Skagit River is established at Mount Vernon.
- 1872** Yellowstone National Park is established as first national park, and first such park world-wide; it is managed by the U.S. Army.
- Summer, 1872** Smohalla, Wanapum Indian prophet, predicted that the Great Spirit would soon shake the earth to show his displeasure with the encroaching white man.
- Dec. 14, 1872** A major earthquake, estimated to exceed 7 on the Richter scale, is felt throughout north-central Washington; the quake's epicenter is located in the approximate vicinity of today's Ross Lake.
- 1876–1877** A huge log jam at Mount Vernon is finally removed, allowing steamboat navigation up the Skagit River; Otto von Pressentin and others discover a trace of gold along lower Ruby Creek.

CALENDAR DATES CONTINUED »

- 1879** N. E. Goodell establishes a trading post near present-day Newhalem, to supply gold prospectors on Ruby Creek.
- Winter, 1879–80** A gold rush begins, with the lower reach of Ruby Creek packed with prospectors who endured snow depths of 12 ft or more in the upper Skagit River valley; most prospectors access the valley from the lower Fraser River, near today's Hope, B.C.; others access the valley from below the Skagit gorge at Newhalem.
- CA. 1881** N. E. Goodell visits a traditional Skagit Indian long house near today's Marblemount, which he describes as 200 ft long and 50 ft wide with siding of cedar planks 12 ft long and 18 in wide.
- 1884** John McMillan establishes a homestead in the lower Big Beaver valley.
- 1890** Most of the land available for homesteading under the Dawes Act (1887) is claimed in the Marblemount-Newhalem-lower Cascade River vicinity.



JACK MOUNTAIN AND SOURDOUGH LOOKOUT PHOTOGRAPHED IN WINTER BY JOHN SCURLOCK

- 1891** A railroad line reaches Rockport from the west.
- CA. 1895** Tommy Rowland settles across from the mouth of Big Beaver Creek, on the east side of the Skagit River.
- 1897** President Grover Cleveland proclaims the Washington Forest Reserve, which includes the North Cascades and the Upper Skagit.
- 1905** The U.S. Forest Service was created and assumed management of the Upper Skagit Valley.
- 1916** The Skagit River freezes over.
- 1917** The first Sourdough Lookout is built by Frank Davis (son of Lucinda Davis, a pioneering settler); the City of Seattle begins building Gorge Dam, the first of three on the Skagit River.
- 1922** Railroad transportation, to serve dam construction, is completed to Newhalem.
- 1922 (July 29)** John McMillan dies at his ranch in the Big Beaver valley
- 1924** The City of Seattle begins operation of Gorge Dam (a wood crib dam) and powerhouse.
- 1924** Guy Cook (Gerry's grandfather) comes to work at Newhalem, drives the train between Rockport and Diablo.
- 1926** A forest fire started in the Big Beaver valley spread rapidly to burn a large area around Ross Lake.
- 1929** Construction of Diablo Dam is completed.
- 1932** Desolation Lookout is built.
- 1933** A Civilian Conservation Corps crew builds the present-day Sourdough Lookout.

- 1933 Ed Cook (Gerry's dad) works trails for the U.S. Forest Service and stays at the Boundary Guard Station.
- 1939 First concrete is poured in Ross Dam.
- CA. 1943 Clearing begins of the forest that will be inundated behind Ross Dam.
- 1949 The concrete structure of Ross Dam is completed and waters of the Skagit River are impounded.
- 1950 Replacement of the original wooden Gorge Dam by a concrete structure is completed.
- 1952 The first Ross Powerhouse generator is completed and the first power from the dam is supplied to Seattle.
- 1953 The full Ross Dam reservoir height, to an elevation of 1602.5 ft, is reached; waters touch Canadian soil for the first time.
- 1956 Jack Kerouac is fire lookout on Desolation Mountain.
- 1967 Gerry' first year working on Ross Lake.
- 1968 North Cascades National Park Service Complex is established by Congress.
- 1971 Gerry is fire lookout on Sourdough Mountain as new North Cascades Highway is built.
- 1972 The new North Cascades Highway opens, providing the first vehicle route across the North Cascades.
- 1984 Bob's first visit to Ross Lake to start an archeological study for the park, while an employee of WSU.
- 1987 The first of many Hozomeen chert (flint) quarries discovered in the Upper Skagit, dating to 8,400 years ago.
- 1988 Most of the North Cascades National Park Service Complex is formally designated Wilderness by U.S. Congress and entered into the National Wilderness Preservation System.
- 1999 In the spring, Ross Lake is drawn down 134 feet, the lowest level since the reservoir was impounded; archeological investigations continue on Skagit River landscapes previously inundated for 50 years.
- Oct. 2003 One of the largest Skagit River floods on record causes floodplain erosion and builds gravel bars and woody debris piles; heavy rains trigger landslides up Goodell Creek and in the Skagit Gorge above Newhalem.
- 2005 Hozomeen chert toolstone from the Upper Skagit is found in the 9,000 year old soil at Cascade Pass.



SPEAR POINT MADE OF HOZOMEEN CHERT FROM CASCADE PASS
PHOTOGRAPHED BY BENJAMIN DRUMMOND