



Newcomers

From time immemorial, the weyíletpuu (Cayuse) have called this valley and this region home. Intimate with every part of it, they consider each plant and animal to be a relative. Over tens of thousands of years they have managed for the best mix of forest and grassland to support their foods.

Inspired by the religious zeal of the time, Marcus and Narcissa Whitman left their New York home in 1836 to open a Christian mission among the pášxapuu band of weyíletpuu. pášxapuu interest in this new lifestyle and religion waxed and waned; few converted. When the mission's sponsors wanted to end the effort, Marcus Whitman hastened east to petition for continuing the mission. Successful, he returned, leading the first major wagon train through weyíletpuu land.

Increasing waves of immigrants alarmed weyíletpuu leaders t̄lewkeyʔkt, ʔic̄yéeye šiléq̄š, and tamáxaš. They were convinced weyíletpuu sovereignty and lands were threatened. Then a measles epidemic killed over half the pášxapuu, mostly children and elders. Many suspected that Marcus Whitman's failure to cure them was an intentional way to acquire their land. Tensions reached a breaking point. Life in the Walla Walla Valley would soon change forever.

There's blood left here by both sides. Our ancestors and the other people—their breath left them here. We both hold this ground sacred and special.

kojamá šámq̄n (Fermore Craig), 2015

Overlooking the mission site and valley
NPS

Moving with the Seasons

weyíletpuu spirituality is rooted in tamáalwit, laws that govern use of the land and follow natural cycles of the landscape. The laws dictate how humans relate to plants, animals, water and other natural elements. tamáalwit requires people to move frequently to manage dispersed foods. Abiding by tamáalwit, weyíletpuu enjoyed stable communities and economic success.



nacóʔx
Chinook salmon
© FLICKR FORD

pášx
Balsamroot sunflower
DAVE POWELL/USDA FOREST SERVICE

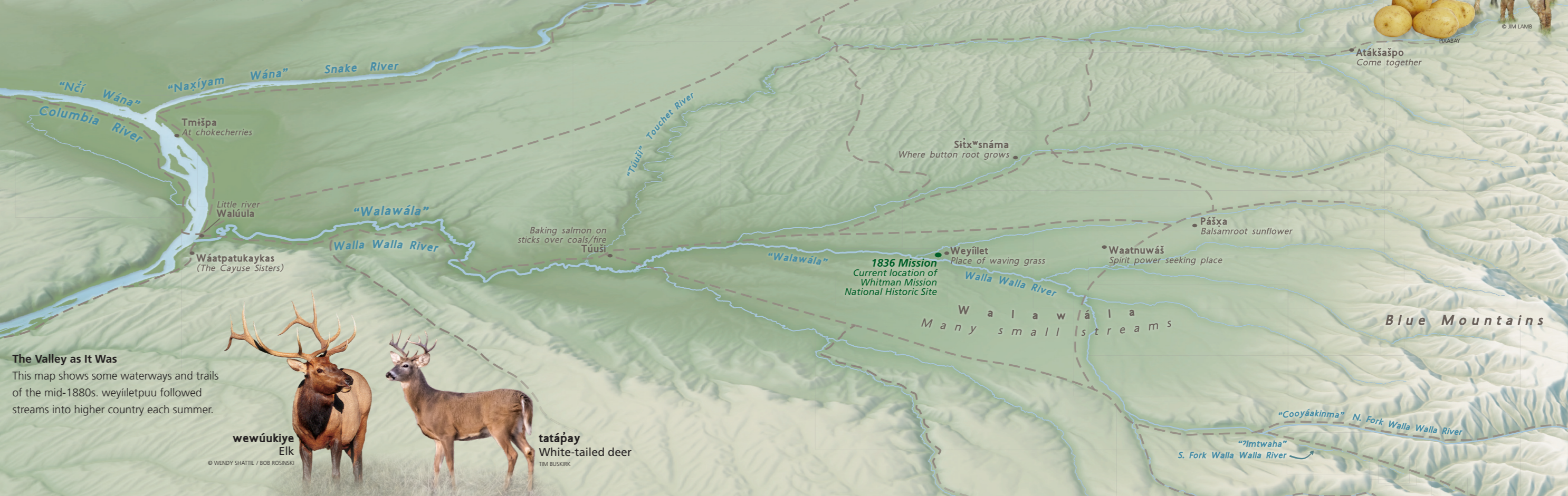
The Valley as It Was

This map shows some waterways and trails of the mid-1880s. weyíletpuu followed streams into higher country each summer.



wewúkiye
Elk
© WENDY SHATTE / BOB ROSINSKI

tatápay
White-tailed deer
TIM BUSKIRK



The Earth says that God tells me to take care of the Indians. . . . God names the roots that he should feed the Indians on. The water speaks the same way. . . . Take good care of the earth and do each other no harm. God said. weyíletpuu leader táwatoy, 1855



tmiš
Chokecherries
© DOUG WAYLETT

cemítx
Huckleberries
© MARE JOY SMITH

táxcikay
Berry basket
NPS

Staying in One Place

A religious revival in the 1800s, called the "Second Great Awakening," encouraged Christians to dedicate their lives to missionary work. Inspired by this revival, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions sent the Whitmans and other missionaries throughout the continent to convert American Indians.

All are scattered in little groups far and near, digging their kamas root and taking salmon. Here is the missionary's trial in this country. The people are with him so little of the time, and they are so scattered that he cannot go with them.

Narcissa Whitman writing about weyíletpuu seasonal rounds, 1841

The Whitmans introduced the weyíletpuu to a different spiritual relationship to land. People stayed in one place tending fields and livestock instead of moving with the food. This new way of life conflicted with weyíletpuu spirituality and tamáalwit, and began to destabilize their society.



The Whitmans wanted the weyíletpuu to raise animals like sheep and crops like wheat and potatoes.
© JIM LAMB

Atákšašpo
Come together
© PIXABAY

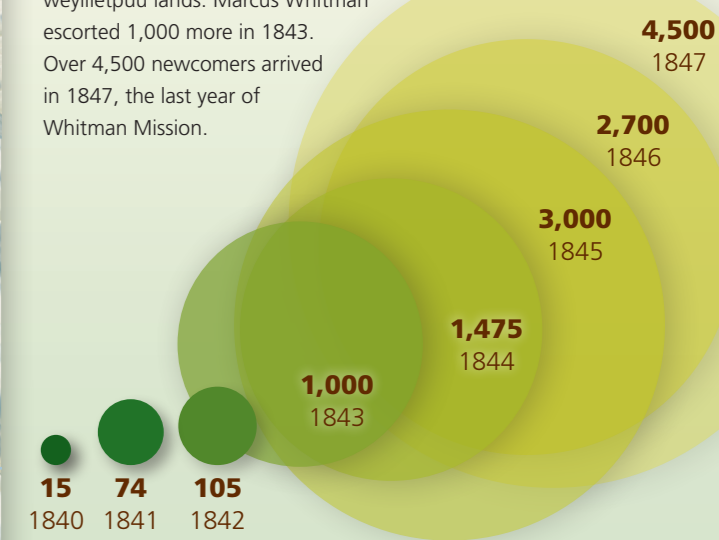
A New Mission

Originally the missionaries' calling was to bring their Christian beliefs to the tribes. When Marcus Whitman failed in this calling, he shifted his focus to selling crops and livestock to other missions and ministering to new immigrants. These shifts, along with a growing weyíletpuu frustration and sense of alienation, transformed the "mission" into an immigrant way station.

It does not concern me so much what is to become of any particular set of Indians. . . . I have no doubt our greatest work is to be to aid the white settlement of this country and help to found its religious institutions. . . . The Indians have in no case obeyed the command to multiply and replenish the earth, and they cannot stand in the way of others.

Marcus Whitman in a letter to Narcissa's parents, 1844

In 1840, 15 US immigrants entered weyíletpuu lands. Marcus Whitman escorted 1,000 more in 1843. Over 4,500 newcomers arrived in 1847, the last year of Whitman Mission.

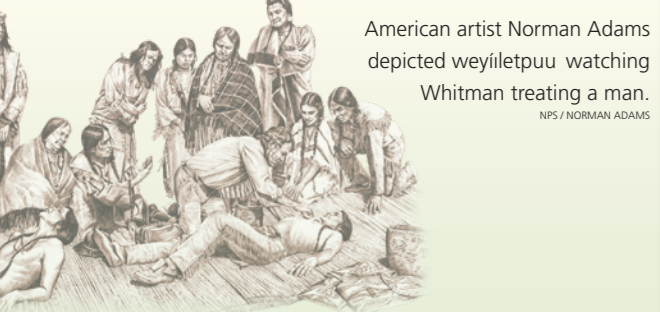


New Dangers

We had medicines for diseases from here. Medicines and poultices. But they brought new diseases like smallpox and measles, that my people had no defense against. paqaʔlapáykt (Norman Dumont), 2017

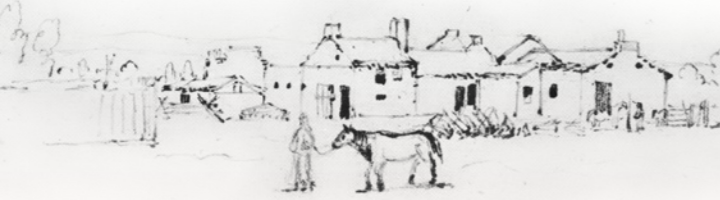
By 1840, native communities along the lower Columbia River had been decimated by malaria. Formerly vibrant communities could no longer defend themselves or their homes. The weyíletpuu knew this and feared the same result.

When measles struck the mission community in 1847, most immigrants recovered, thanks to natural immunity. But the weyíletpuu did not have immunity, and they had already been weakened by other diseases. Thirty of the 50 pášxapuu band died within six weeks. Survivors questioned whether Whitman had poisoned them, intentionally introduced the disease, or made mistakes.



The Braly family was among the immigrants carrying measles into weyíletpuu land. The son, John, wrote: Father was the first victim of measles in our family; but soon, one after another was stricken, until blessed mother and I were the only ones fit for duty. . . . We had only one more range to cross—the Blue Mountains—before reaching Whitman’s Mission. . . . Mother was now very ill.

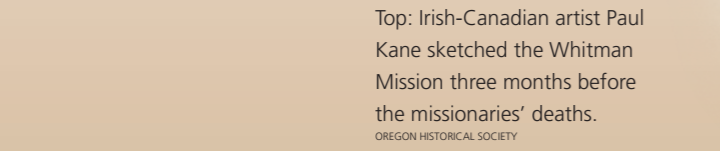
The Mission’s Last Day



Trained as a physician, Marcus Whitman believed that ministering to the physical health of his followers was an important complement to his ministry of their spiritual health. Similarly, twáat (weyíletpuu doctors) drew upon their spiritual connections for healing power. When Whitman assumed the role of twáat, he knew he had to abide by twáat ethics, which recognized those with the power to heal also have the power to kill. The weyíletpuu penalty for malpractice was death.

The night of November 28, 1847, a small group of men led by tilewkeyʔkt met near the mission. They discussed options to halt the spread of death and concluded Whitman was the problem. The next day, Whitman received warnings of a plan to kill him but did not react. By evening, he and Narcissa lay dead. Within days 11 more men were dead. Forty-seven other people, including children, were held hostage until December 24.

Newspaper editors soon reacted: For the barbarian murderers . . . let them be pursued with unrelenting hostility, until their lifeblood has atoned for their infamous deeds; let them be hunted as beasts of prey; let their name and race be blotted from the face of the earth, and the place that once knew them, know them no more forever. Oregon Spectator, January 20, 1848



Top: Irish-Canadian artist Paul Kane sketched the Whitman Mission three months before the missionaries’ deaths. OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Revenge and Sacrifice

In March 1848, immigrant settlers organized a militia to seek revenge for the November killings. For several years they waged what is known as the Cayuse War. They seized horses and cattle, cut off weyíletpuu from their gardens, and disrupted their seasonal harvest. The weyíletpuu faced famine. To preserve any future for their people, they surrendered five men for the killings at Whitman Mission: tilewkeyʔkt, ʔicyéeye šiléqis, koýmá šamqin, tamáxaš, and tókomut.

The trial began May 21, 1850. The men were quickly convicted despite lack of evidence and disagreements over jurisdiction and applicable law. They were hanged June 3. All five men were buried in one unmarked grave. Their descendants still search for them.

Our Cayuse people were labeled terrorists and murderers because of the events at Whitman Mission. While it is true that people should be held accountable, it disregards the jurisdiction that we had over our own country and our own people. sisáawipam (Roberta Conner), 2019



German-American artist Gustavas Sohon sketched the crowd at the 1855 treaty council (below) and táwatoy (above). WASHINGTON STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY



The land where my forefathers are buried should be mine. That is the place I am speaking for . . . that is what I love—the place we get our roots to live upon. táwatoy (Young Chief) at the 1855 treaty council

German-American artist Gustavas Sohon sketched the crowd at the 1855 treaty council (below) and táwatoy (above). WASHINGTON STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Trauma and Healing

All people are traumatized by this history. We all have to heal from trauma at some point. Not only the tribal side, but the nontribal side as well.

wiyáapalašarimay (Malissa Minthorn Winks), 2015

Those who lived and are buried here are central to this place. Their presence resonates through teachings, graves, and an atmosphere of sacredness. Others, buried elsewhere but forever connected to these events, are no less central. We continue to draw from their tragedy to learn and practice understanding and empathy.

The Cayuse people, one of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, remain strong and sovereign, applying tamáalwit to the land and their lives.

This site, these events, were catalysts . . . to the colonization of the Pacific Northwest, established the Oregon Territory, and brought in the treaties. To me, these events created the foundation for all that followed: these events reverberated through the lives of everyone then and continue to impact lives today.

pítamyanon maqsmáqs (Phillip Cash Cash), 2015

In one lifetime, native lands shrunk from the entire Columbia River Basin to one plot of land per family in the dark brown area.



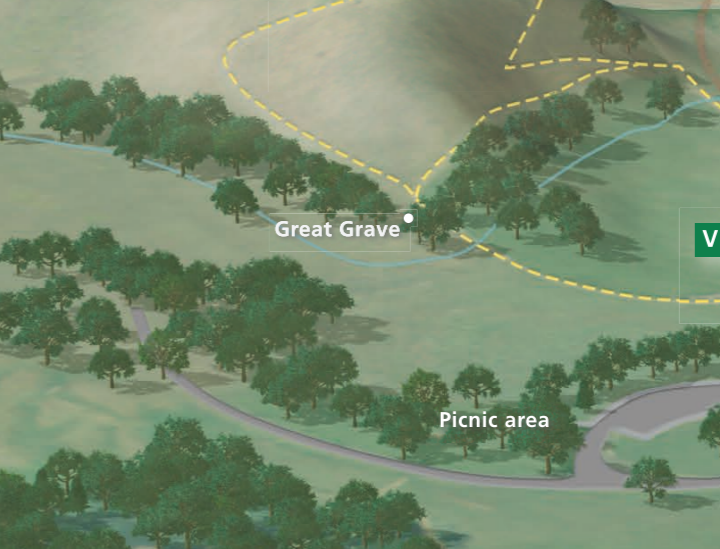
Whitman Mission Today

Whitman Mission National Historic Site commemorates these events and explores how the mission changed this region in ways no one could have imagined. We welcome everyone and encourage you to reflect on the solemnity of this place.

Please visit the park website for park and visitor center hours. The visitor center includes information, museum exhibits, a film, and bookstore.



Plant gatherers from the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Spring 2018. © CONFEDERATED UMATILLA JOURNAL



Things to Do Explore the park using self-guiding trails. • Walk up the hill for a view of Walla Walla Valley. • Earn a Junior Ranger badge.

Accessibility We strive to make our facilities, services, and programs accessible to all. For information go to the visitor center, ask a ranger, call, or check our website.

Tamástlikt Cultural Institute The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation invite you to



Scale varies in this perspective view. Approximate scale at visitor center. 0 100 Feet 0 100 Meters



Emergencies call 911

This is one of over 400 parks in the National Park System. To learn more about national parks, visit www.nps.gov.



More Information Whitman Mission National Historic Site 328 Whitman Mission Rd. Walla Walla, WA 99362 509-522-6360 www.nps.gov/whmi

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