
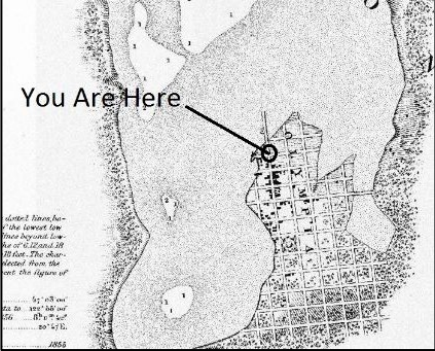




# Olympia Oyster History: A Walking Tour



Oysters played a part in securing Olympia as the permanent Capitol of Washington State.  
From E.N. Steele, "The Rise and Decline of the Olympia Oyster":

*"[The location of the capitol] was put to a vote of the people and the contest became very spirited. The people of Olympia got their heads together and planned a campaign; they arranged for public meetings in many of the most populated points in Eastern Washington, supplied themselves with a goodly quantity of oysters and the battle was on. Their arguments why the Capital should remain in Olympia were many and forcefully stated, but the clinching argument was the oyster dinner following the meeting. They created a warmth and friendly spirit and the oysters were so well liked that much publicity was given, not only to the merit of the arguments, but to the merit of the oysters. Olympia won the election, and the oyster dinners were given the credit.*

Location	Details
Near State & Capitol Way  <p style="text-align: center; font-size: small;">G. ROSENTHAL, THE PIONEER OYSTERMAN</p>	<b>ROSENTHAL &amp; LIGHTNER GENERAL MERCHANDISE</b> (Location approximate) In 1868 pioneer Olympia merchant Gustav Rosenthal was among the first to purchase Olympia Oysters from native gatherers for resale outside Olympia. However, the inability to ship fresh oysters rapidly outside the area limited Rosenthal's customers to nearby towns on Puget Sound.
Near Thurston and Capitol Way  <p style="text-align: center;">You Are Here</p>	<b>TIDEFLATS</b> Originally this was the northern extent of dry land in Olympia. Beyond and surrounding this point was a tide flat that stretched nearly a mile northward during low tide. It was a productive shellfish gathering site for native people for thousands of years. After American settlers arrived, the desire for a deep water port led to a series of projects beginning in the 1880s to dredge shipping channels and use the spoils to create the land north of this point. The effects of dredging, using the fill area as a dump site, and wastewater generated by households and industry ended Olympia Oyster harvesting near Olympia. Today, most harvesting on South Sound takes place on Eld and Totten inlets, to the west
Percival Landing: Corner Water St & State Ave	<b>SITE OF CHINOOK ST</b> Near this site stood the ancient Squaxin village of Schictwoot. For millennia, a staple food for the Squaxin was the Olympia Oyster. After the arrival of American settlers, Olympia Oysters became an important trade item. As the new town of Olympia developed, this area was known as "Chinook St." This mural, commissioned by the Olympia Downtown Association for the 2012 Paddle to Squaxin Canoe Journey, presents a Salish welcome figure and 7 canoes, representing the 7 inlets of South Puget Sound, whose people make up the Squaxin Island Tribe. Artists: Ira Coyne & Joe Seymour
Olympia Oyster House  <p style="text-align: center; font-size: small;">Shucking, packing and shipping plant of Olympia Oyster Co. located on West Fourth Avenue, Olympia. Built about 1924. Now occupied by Olympia Oyster House.</p>	<b>OLYMPIA OYSTER CO</b> Built in 1924 as the Olympia Oyster Co processing plant, the proprietors added a small oyster bar in 1941 for retail customers. In 1949 new owners converted the entire building into a restaurant, the Olympia Oyster House. Over the years it has remained an Olympia institution, recovering from two devastating fires in 1957 and 2013.
Sand Man: not an Oyster Tender, but similar 	<b>OYSTER TENDERS</b> Advances in transportation made export of fresh oysters far from Puget Sound possible. Once harvested from the beds on Eld, Totten, and other nearby inlets, they were quickly shipped to Olympia on the freight and passenger steamers that plied Puget Sound in the late 1800s and early 1900s. After processing, Oysters departed to points south from the nearby Olympia and Chehalis Valley Railroad terminal on the west end of the 4th Ave bridge. By the early 1900s, the advent of gas and diesel engines led Oyster Companies to run their own boats, called "tenders." This allowed rapid shipment from the oyster beds to offload directly to the processing plants built along west 4th Ave. Among the tenders operating in Olympia were the Mizpah, the Polly, the Chickeree, the Traveler, the Lark, the Hyak, the Noble, the Leota, and the Dove.

Location	Details
<p>NW Corner 4<sup>th</sup> Ave &amp; Simmons St, Bayview Parking Lot</p>	<p><b>SITE OF JJ BRENNER OYSTER CO</b></p> <p>JJ Brenner opened the first oyster processing plant in Olympia at this site in 1893. The Olympia and Chehalis Valley Railroad depot was located nearby, on the west end of the 4th Ave bridge, enabling prompt shipment of fresh oysters to Portland and points south and east. In 1927 a new plant built of concrete replaced the original wooden structure.</p>
<p>East end of 4<sup>th</sup> Ave Bridge, S side of 4th Ave Site of Capital Oyster Co: Founded by David Richard "Dick" Helser</p>	<p><b>HARVEST BOUNDARY</b></p> <p>The first commercial harvesters of shellfish in Olympia were native women. Harvest took place at low tide, day or night. Natives used wooden sledges with iron tops to hold small fires, for warmth and light while they harvested. In the 1860s oysters sold for 25c per bag.</p> <p>Early on, Chinese immigrants in Olympia also took up small-scale oyster harvesting, in competition with natives. Chinese arrived in Olympia by the early 1850s. Barred by whites from working in direct competition with white male labor, oyster gathering was one of the few opportunities available to them.</p> <p>Competition with native oyster harvesters led to an informal agreement between the two groups: Chinese gathered Oysters in the tide flats south of Fourth Ave while natives harvested to the north.</p>
<p>Heritage Park: Olympia Chinese Community Marker Behind Traditions Café</p>	<p><b>IMMIGRANT LABOR</b></p> <p>In the 1800 and early 1900s several Chinese labor brokers supplied Chinese contract workers to the oyster industry. Among these businesses were the Hong Yek Kee Co, Hong Hai Co and the Quong Yuen Sang Co.</p> <p>After 1900 Japanese immigrants supplanted Chinese laborers, due to restrictions on Chinese immigration. By the 1920s Filipino labor played a large role in the industry as well.</p> <p>In the 1970s many Southeast Asian immigrants in western Washington found their first jobs in the oyster industry. Today, Hispanic immigrants comprise a large part of the labor force.</p>
<p>Budd Inlet, Deschutes Estuary</p>	<p><b>USS CONSTITUTION</b></p> <p>In 1933 the USS Constitution visited Olympia as part of a tour of the west coast. During the multi-day celebration, Olympia businesses accepted "Oyster Money"- wooden scrip in the shape of Olympia Oyster shells.</p>
<p>Capitol Way between 4<sup>th</sup> &amp; 5<sup>th</sup>, roughly where the Olympia Federal parking lot is located</p>	<p><b>CRANE'S CAFE</b></p> <p>A popular stop along the historic Pacific Coast Highway, Crane's Cafe beckoned travelers with a large neon sign promoting Olympia Oysters.</p>
<p>Corner of 5<sup>th</sup> &amp; Washington roughly where Captain Little, Olyphant Art, &amp; 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Sandwiches are located</p>	<p><b>DOANE'S OYSTER HOUSE</b></p> <p>The Olympia Oyster achieved wide fame in the late 1800s mainly from the reputation of Captain Woodbury Doane's Olympia Oyster Pan Roast.</p> <p>The reputation of Doane's hospitality and his Oyster Pan Roast attracted visitors from far away. Doane kept the exact recipe a closely guarded secret, but some suspected his Chinese cooks enhanced the dish with techniques and seasonings then unfamiliar to western cooks. The Oyster Pan Roast was so popular that Doane served about 60 gallons of oysters a day.</p> <p>Doane's Oyster House became the hub for political affairs in Olympia. Attempts by legislators from other Washington cities to move the Capital from Olympia were countered by "pro-Olympia" Oyster feeds, leading to the Oyster's nickname, the "succulent lobbyist."</p> <p>Captain Doane passed away in 1903 but the fame of the Olympia Oyster as a delicacy lives on, still served in Olympia Restaurants. Fifth Avenue between Capitol and Washington.</p>



The third shucking and packing plant of the J. J. Brenner Oyster Company, built in 1927, Fourth Avenue, Olympia, Washington

