



Accessibility via Technology

Making Huge Documents Available Online!

by Mary Hammer, Digital Projects Archivist

Large format scanning enables the Washington State Archives to provide access to a plethora of oversized records while keeping the originals safe and secure. After the 2001 Nisqually earthquake, staff regularly pulled Capitol Campus building blueprints for architects working on historic building repair. Each time these fragile blueprints were pulled (some dating back to 1893), they made a three floor journey from our dark, temperature controlled stacks to our research room, leaving a trail of blue paper bits. Staff quickly realized they needed another way to access these blueprints, or the originals would not last very long. Enter: large format scanner! By digitizing these fragile materials, we could provide online access without worrying about hastened deterioration due to transport, finger oils, light exposure, and temperature changes. Additionally, images could be zoomed in on and enhanced, making very small details easy to read.

The Archives chose the German-made Cruse scanner for several reasons: the scanner has a fixed light source that provides even illumination across the entire surface of an original while subjecting it to very little light exposure, a book handling system for fragile volumes, and a vacuum table for wrinkled or curled originals that need flattening.

Here are a few collections to which we're able to



Book handling system: A volume is placed on two cushioned, spring loaded cradles that can be adjusted separately to prevent damage to the spine of a book. The cradle is then gently pushed up against a sheet of glass to flatten the pages and create a uniform scan. The Cruse scans the volume from above the glass. The picture above shows the book handling system in use.

Vacuum table: Materials are laid on the Cruse scan table face up and scanned from above. The vacuum table provides gentle suction underneath the scan table, holding documents flat, which decreases wrinkles or curls. This allows for a uniform scan, without damaging the original.

provide better access, thanks to the Cruse scanner.

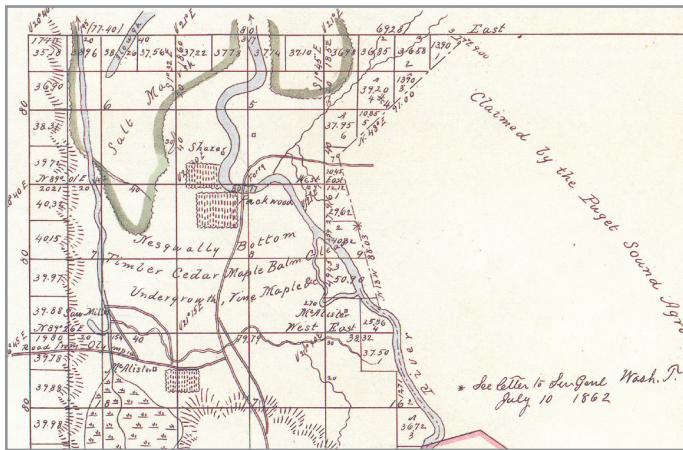
[Military Department Photograph Collection, 1890-1975](#). This collection includes panoramic photographs showing military activities within the state. This particular image is 49 inches long.



146th Field Artillery commanded by Col. H.G. Winsor, Camp Murray, 1921, by Marvin D. Boland.

[Washington State Survey Plats, 1852-1980](#).

Because these maps date back to 1852, they are a valuable resource documenting Washington's natural resources, original place names, Native American reservation boundaries, historic man-made features, and claims. Hand drawn and often colorful, these maps are the result of adventurous surveyors trudging through rivers, mountains, and dense underbrush, taking detailed measurements and notes.

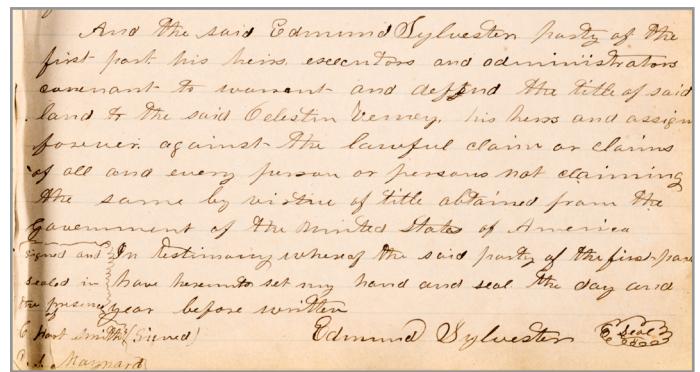


T 18N R 1 E, [Nisqually area], by Geo. B. Guston, 1853.

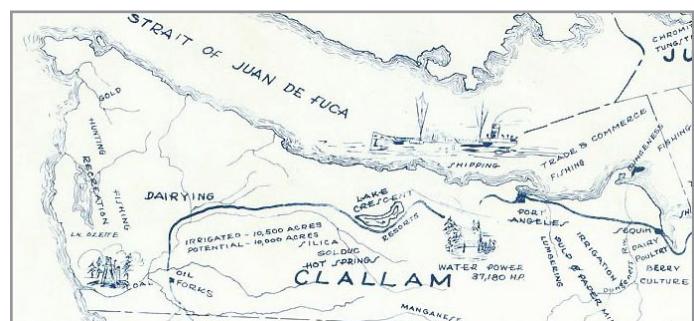
[General Map Collection, 1851-2005](#). This collection of maps created by various state agencies includes an industrial map of the state, published by Ernest N. Hutchinson (Secretary of State, 1933-1938). It is an interesting example of the way the state defined its economies in the New Deal era. This pictorial map measures 37 x 67 inches and is very detailed, so the ability to zoom in is helpful.

[Thurston County First Record Book, 1852-](#)

[1857](#). This oversized volume includes official recordings for county commissioners' proceedings, deeds, probate records, and marriage records. This particular entry witnesses as Edmund Sylvester sells Lot 5, 8 in Block 3 in Olympia to Celestin Verney for \$35 in 1850.



Deed, 1850.



Industrial Map, State of Washington, ca. 1935, by John Walker.