

“Six Degrees of Separation”

Six degrees of Separation is a theory that says anyone on the planet can be connected to anyone else on the planet through a chain of acquaintances that has no more than five people between them. It sounds a little far-fetched, but thousands of examples have been given. On the other hand, it always seems like a remarkable coincidence when it’s accidentally demonstrated on a more local level. Here’s a recent example:

I moved to Granite Falls from a suburb named Machias about 25 years ago, soon meeting a “local” named Bob Miller. Bob was a retired railroad engineer who loved anything that was old and mechanical, and I am an antique car owner and lifelong railroad fan. We talked about old cars, old engines, old railroads (after all, there was the Everett & Monte Cristo that had helped build the town), old telegraphs, old townsites, . . . and even on occasion old women (but that’s another story).

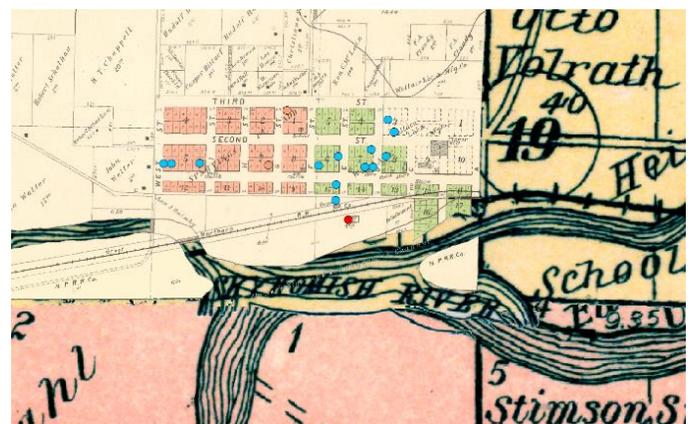
Bob sucked me into the local history museum, and I’ve participated in the continued growth of that organization over the years. We’ve built a new museum building, filled it with great pictures and artifacts, hosted thousands of great visitors, modernized the collection through digitization (we can now search our pictures, documents, texts, newspapers, yearbooks, maps, etc. electronically), and joined in efforts to document the history of central Snohomish County.

A big effort in 2016 was taking an inventory of historic assets across the county – we attempted to document buildings, railroads, cemeteries, dams, tunnels, bridges, “lost places”, businesses, lookouts . . . anything that had a place in creating our history and forming our local civilization. A lot of information was gathered in electronic form (maps, aerial photos, etc.) and was used to investigate and document hundreds of items. One such item was marked in county records as a “transportation-related development” near the tracks in the town of Startup. We marked it as a red dot on our maps and aerial photos. Other buildings from county data were also marked (100-year-old family dwellings with blue dots, schools and churches with tan dots):



Even in 1910, map makers realized that the downtown areas required more resolution on their maps, so they created more detailed maps for all the “downtowns” in the county. Startup was no exception:

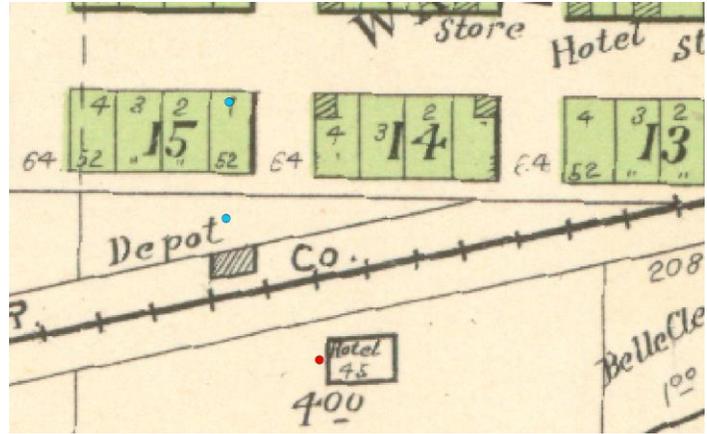
Our modern museum system allows us to zoom in much more closely to get a more detailed view of the buildings marked. We can start to identify some of the details from over a century ago . . .



Zooming in on the south side of town, we can see the red dot marks what the 1910 map called “Hotel 45”, apparently considered a “railroad hotel”, for which it received that “transportation-related” label.

Traveling with our museum intern, I drove into the parking area next to the building that is there today – a particularly attractive older residence. A gentleman in the driveway greeted us and asked what we were doing. When I explained our mission to document some of the older buildings in the area, he asked if we knew what his residence had once been. “Hotel 45?” He smiled and confirmed that, saying that it had later been known as the Wallace River Inn, and he had guest books going back to the 1930s that even had Clark Gable’s signature in them. He later emailed us a picture that had been taken from the front window of the hotel, looking across the tracks, and you can see the two “blue dots” from the map above in that early picture. The farthest one is a house that’s still standing, but the nearer one clearly was (and still is a remnant of) the railroad depot!

OK, OK, back to the “six degrees” issue! Just remember the **Wallace River Inn** – a newly found fact from a new friend in Startup.



(1910 map above, modern aerial photo below)



Bob Miller had made many friends through the years, one of the closest of which was a gentleman named Ted Cleveland, who for many years has lived in Skykomish. Like Bob, Ted was a retired railroad guy, and naturally interested in our Granite Falls Historical Museum because of the extensive data we have on Monte Cristo. You see, Ted’s father was the first child born in Monte Cristo! So, Ted became a good friend of our museum. Ted’s grandfather was Charles Addison Cleveland, and had come to Snohomish County as a young adventurer. One of his adventures led him to Monte Cristo, where he worked and joined the young labor organization called Western Federation of Miners (a labor union, in a period when labor unions were not popular with industrial management).



While we were fortunate enough to find some pictures of Ted's ancestors and relatives (some of whom lived in Granite Falls for a time), Ted brought a true treasure to show us: a ribbon that had been preserved for over 100 years celebrating his granddad's union involvement!

It was a two-sided wonder, framed behind glass so that both sides could be viewed. Absolutely magnificent!

Ted recently decided to donate the ribbon to our museum, where it will soon be proudly displayed next to the other Monte Cristo items we are fortunate to have! In my excitement, I decided to review the information that Ted had provided on his ancestors. Then I decided to electronically search some of the historic texts we have in the museum. In the 1926 "History of Snohomish County" by Whitfield I found a short biography of Charles Addison Cleveland:

"Coming to Snohomish county in pioneer times, Charles Addison Cleveland has wisely improved fearing effort which must ever precede ascendancy, and he is now numbered among the substantial business men and valuable citizens of Startup. He was born in Coos- county, New Hampshire, in 1867 and is a son of William H. and Ellen (Darling) Cleveland. His parents settled in Snohomish, Washington, in 1909 and his father has

*reached the ninety-second milestone on life's journey, while the mother is seventy-three years of age. Charles A. Cleveland received a public school education and remained in the east until he was eighteen years of age. Responding to the call of adventure, he came to the Pacific coast and in 1885 secured employment in the Blackman mill at Snohomish, Washington. He also worked in the lumber camps and when he had accumulated sufficient capital embarked in the hotel business. He also engaged in mining in the Monte Cristo district and is now the owner of the **Wallace River Inn** at Startup. This is an excellent hostelry, homelike, comfortable and efficiently managed. Mr. Cleveland is a popular host, as well as an astute business man, and the Inn is a credit to the town . . .".*

Hmm, Charles Cleveland also was marshal of Snohomish in 1890, and became deputy sheriff in 1892. Around the same time, a fellow named Frederick Trump (grandfather of Donald Trump) was running a hotel in Monte Cristo, and became justice of the peace there in 1896 . . . they might have known one another! That might mean our museum is related to the new President of the United States! **Six degrees, it must be true!** 😊

