

Background information on “Map Showing the Distribution of the Indian Tribes of Washington Territory” (1876)

Who was involved in producing this map?

The map was issued by the Department of the Interior, U.S. Geographical and Geological Survey of the Rocky Mountain Region, under the leadership of John Wesley Powell. Powell (1834-1902) served 13 years as director of the U.S. Geological Survey and was director of the Bureau of Ethnology. He led the first expedition through the Grand Canyon in 1869.

The map was drawn by William Healey Dall (1845-1927), a naturalist whose work included physical and cultural anthropology. Dall published more than 1,600 papers, reviews and commentaries in *Nature*, *Science*, *American Naturalist*, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* and publications of the Smithsonian Institution.

The map was produced to accompany a paper written years earlier by George Gibbs (1815-1873), a surveyor, ethnologist and linguist who specialized in the culture of the Indians of the Pacific Northwest. A collection of his papers are maintained by the Smithsonian Institution. Gibbs, who had studied law at Harvard University, was hired by George McClellan (later a Union general) to work as a geologist and ethnologist on the 1853-1855 Pacific Railroad Survey under Washington Territory Gov. Isaac Stevens.

Gibbs’ report for McClellan on the Indian Tribes of Washington Territory recorded the location of tribes before the government began making treaties. After the railroad survey was complete, Gibbs helped Stevens with the treaties. Gibbs also collected data for a census report on the tribes in Washington Territory. Because he spent the last decade of his life in Washington, D.C., it is likely that he gathered the information contained in his paper, “Tribes of Western Washington and Northwestern Oregon,” before 1863.

Where was the map published?

The oversized map accompanied *Contributions to North American Ethnology, Vol. 1*, which was published in 1877 by the Department of the Interior.

What does the map’s placement of the tribes demonstrate?

The following explanation is printed on the map: “The distribution shown is that formerly existing; at present the tribes are gathered on their reservations or largely extinct.” The map does not show the tribes’ distribution in 1876, the year it was completed; rather, it shows their earlier locations.