



WEBFOOTER EXTRA

MAY 2026

CELEBRATING

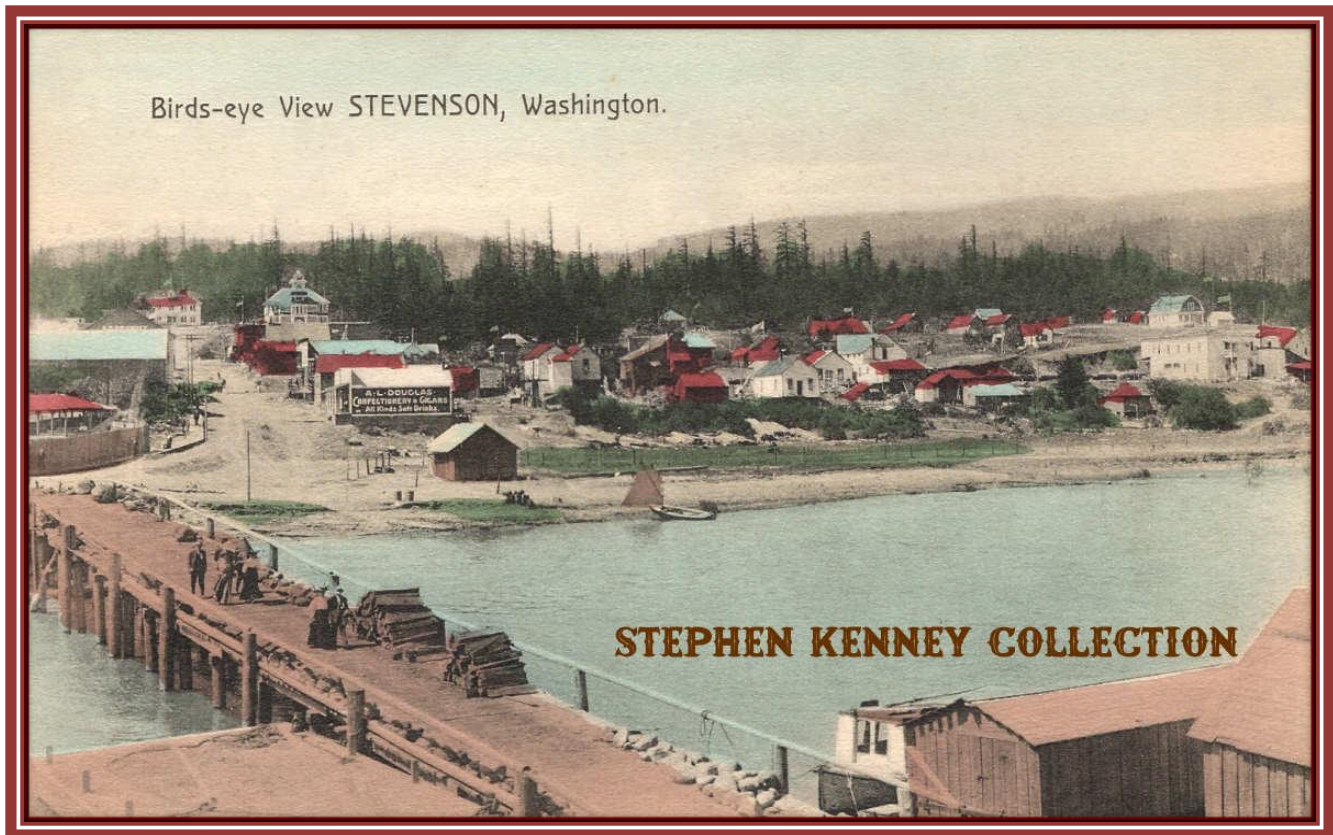


1966-2026

A HISTORY OF STEVENSON, WASHINGTON



Real photo postcard of the Stevenson Band. Postmarked in Stevenson, Wash. on August 16, 1911.



Lithographed birdseye view postcard of Stevenson, Washington circa 1909. Published by the Portland Post Card Company – Portland and Seattle. Postally unused.

A HISTORY OF STEVENSON, WASHINGTON

Stevenson is a small town along the Columbia River in the south-central part of Skamania County, Washington. Non-Native settlers began arriving in the area in the 1850s and settlement continued through the 1890s. The town became the county seat in 1893 and a post office was established there on April 5, 1894.

Stevenson is located in the Columbia River Gorge just above the river's Upper Cascades. The Cascades of the Columbia were created by a massive landslide that blocked the river's path and changed its course. The river tunneled through the landslide, forming the rapids. For several hundred years a stone bridge connected the two banks of the river above the tunnel, until it was destroyed by a powerful earthquake in 1700.

This natural bridge was known as the Great Cross-Over by the Chinookan peoples who had lived along that stretch of the river for millennia. Native American stories about the creation and destruction of the land bridge are also the origin of the current name for the location, and of a highway bridge constructed there in the 1920s connecting Stevenson with Cascade Locks, Oregon. They named it "The Bridge of the Gods."

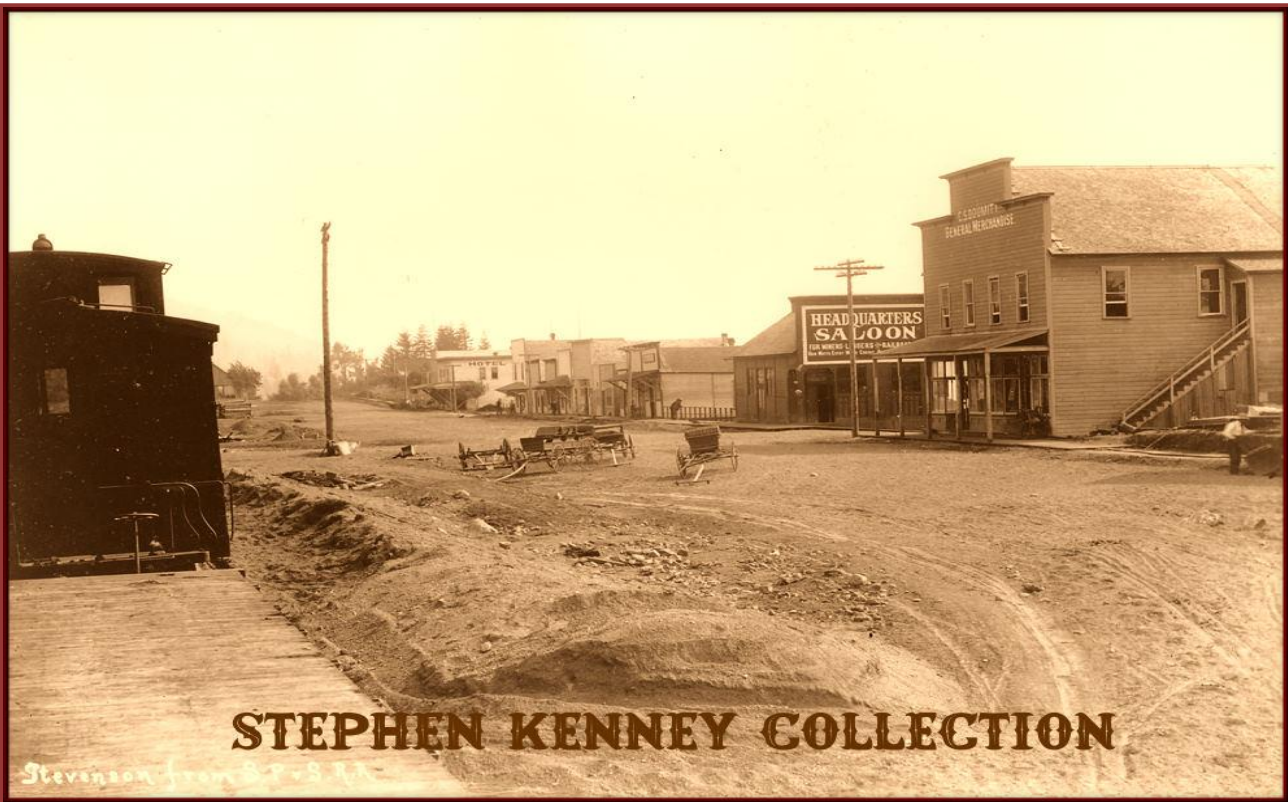
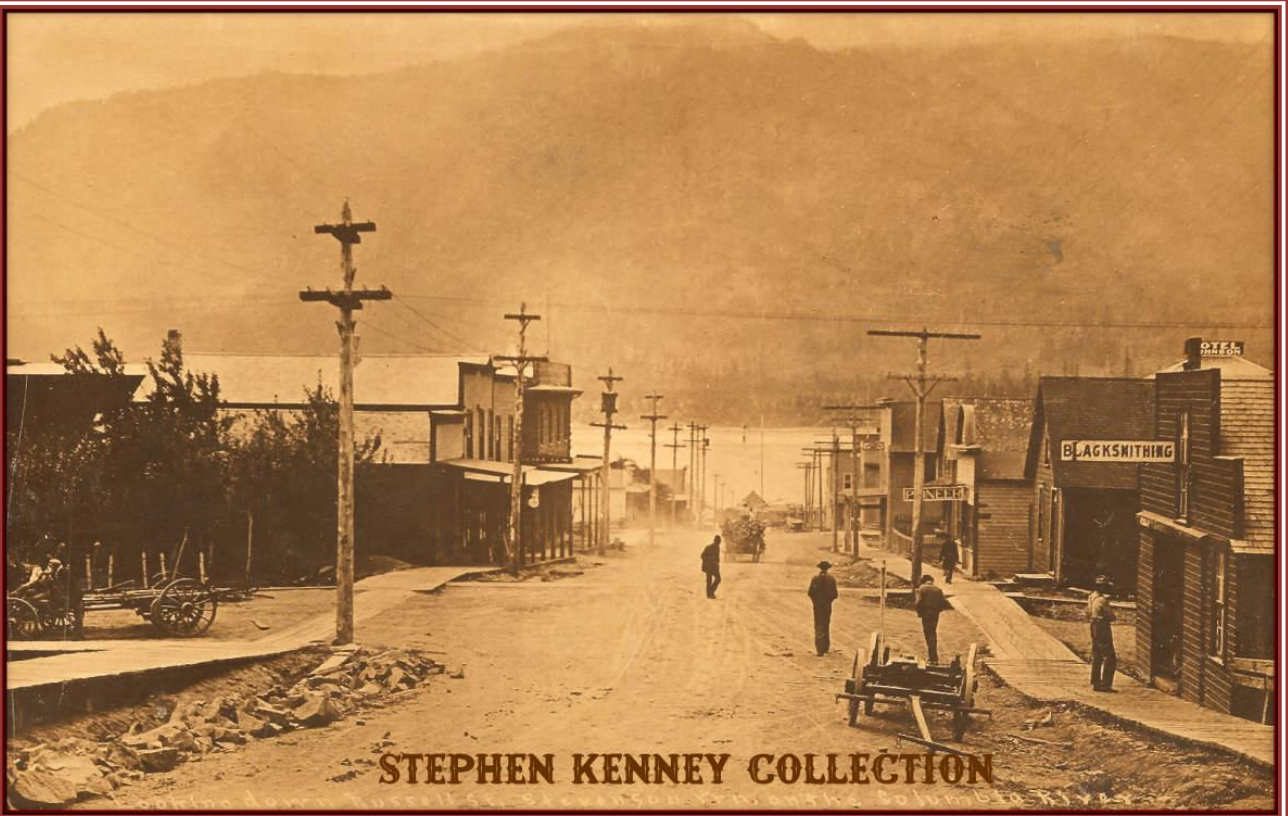


Photo of the Headquarters Saloon in Stevenson, Washington from the SP&S Depot, circa 1908.



Patton real photo postcard of Russell Street in Stevenson, Washington, circa 1909. Postally unused. Photo by C.S. Reeves.



NO 16 STREET SCENE STEVENSON WASH. STEPHEN KENNEY COLLECTION

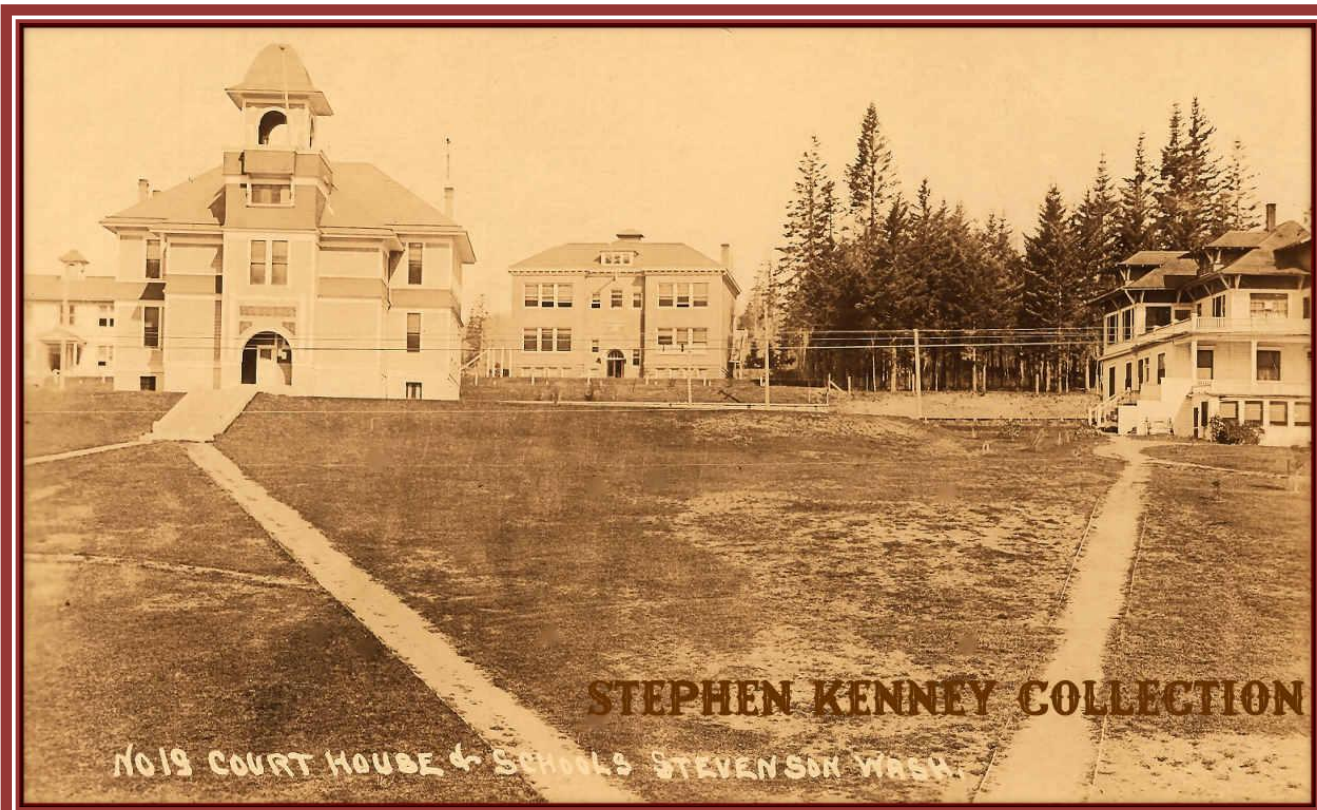
Patton real photo postcard of Main Street in Stevenson, Washington circa 1912. Postmarked April 9, 1919 in Stevenson.

Sanitorium Stevenson Wash.

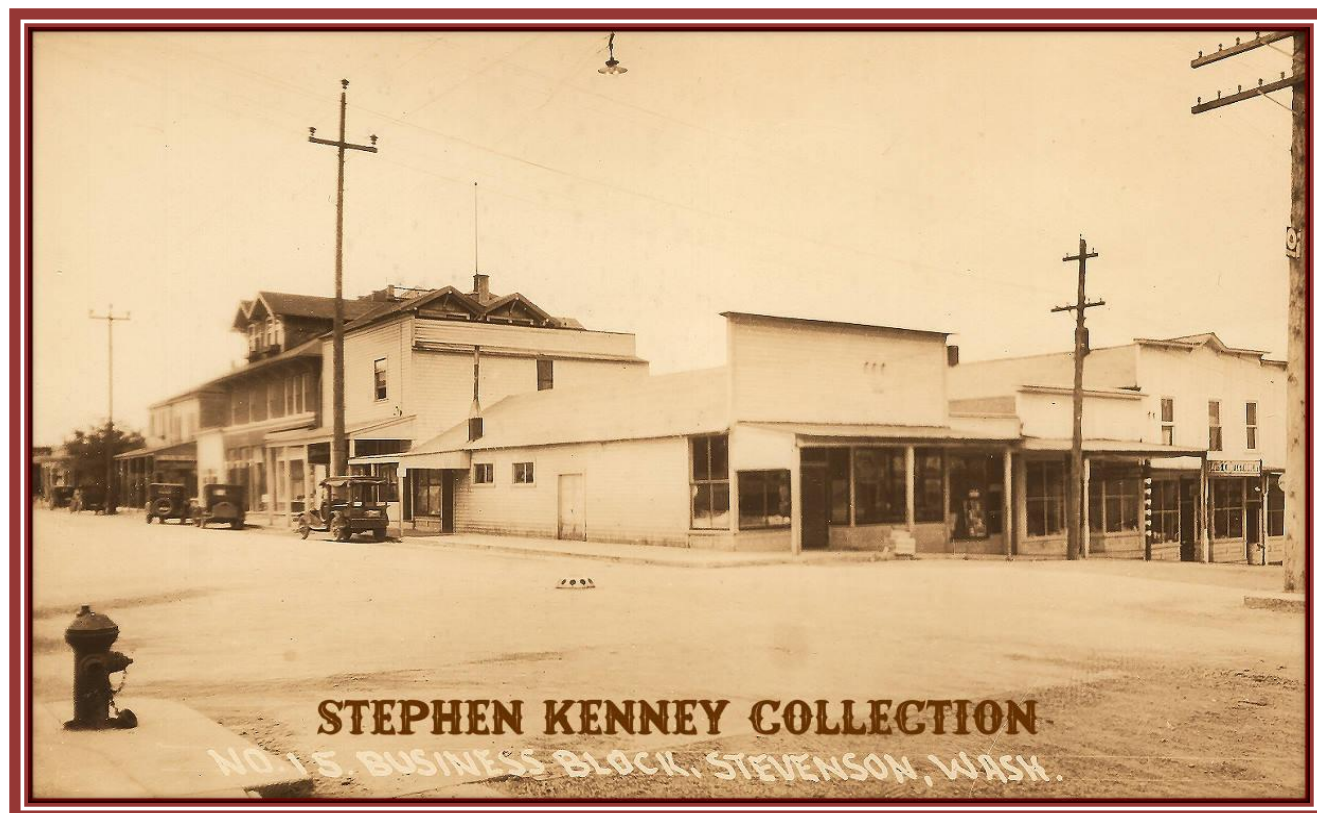
STEPHEN KENNEY COLLECTION



Real photo postcard of the Sanitorium in Stevenson, Washington. Postmarked March 31, 1909 in Table Rock, Washington. It became the Hot Springs Hotel famous for mineral baths and massage.



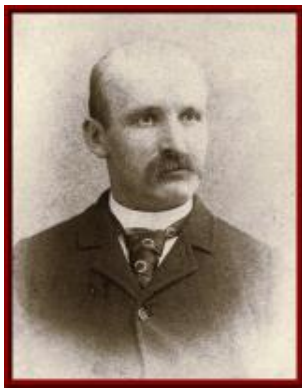
Patton real photo postcard of the Court House and Schools in Stevenson, Washington circa 1914.



Wesley Andrews real photo postcard of the Business Block in Stevenson, Washington circa 1920s. Postally unused.

Prior to 1850, there was some non-Native settlement in the area that would become Skamania County, but it was the passage of the Donation Land Claim Act that provided the first documentation of Skamania County's early settlers. The act allowed married couples to file a claim for up to 640 acres, and single men to claim up to 320 acres, and those claims record the names and homesteads of the early settlers.

By the mid-1800s, pioneers established the town of Cascades just west of Stevenson. Entrepreneurs recognized the potential of supplying cordwood to fuel the steamboats and sternwheelers navigating the Columbia River, a precursor to the lumber industry that would later dominate the area. In 1854, Skamania County was established, and the military post at Lower Cascades was named the county seat.



Stevenson is named for early settler George H. Stevenson. The Stevenson family, who settled in the Gorge in the 1800s after moving west from Missouri, founded the town of Stevenson on the old Shepard donation land claim. Under the auspices of the Stevenson Land Company, George Stevenson purchased the original townsite for \$24,000 in 1893, building the town along the lower flat near the river. Settlers expanded the original dock to serve the daily arrivals of sternwheelers unloading passengers, cargo and loading logs. Photo of George Stevenson courtesy of Washington State Historical Society, circa

1890.

That same year, a major local dispute culminated in the "theft" of the county seat. A group of men, displeased with the location and rental fees, spirited the county records away from the town of Cascades in the dead of night, hauling them to Stevenson on a handcar and in saddlebags. This unlawful maneuver proved fateful, as a massive flood in 1894 completely destroyed the original townsite at Cascades, firmly establishing Stevenson as the permanent county seat. The town was officially incorporated as a city on December 16, 1907.

The arrival of the Spokane, Portland and Seattle Railway in 1908 completely changed the layout of the city. To avoid tracks and frequent flooding, the town was pushed "up the hill" away from the immediate river flats, requiring the grading of streets and construction of wooden sidewalks.

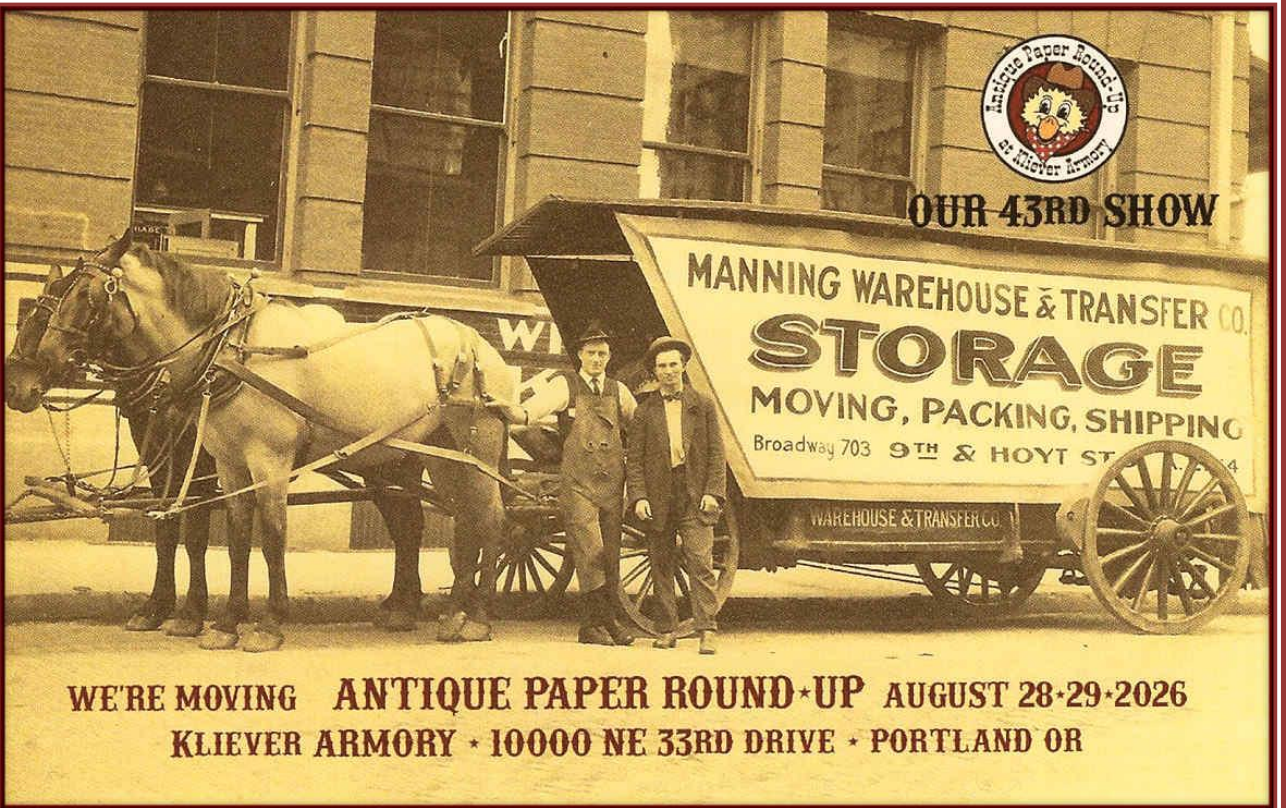
Long a center of the logging and timber industry, Stevenson transitioned over time to relying heavily on tourism. With a population estimated at 1,590 as of 2024, Stevenson has maintained its sense of community in a small-town setting.

Sources for this article:

HistoryLink.org, Steve Kenney, visitstevensonwa.com, Wikipedia



C.S. Reeves real photo postcard of the Bank of Stevenson, circa 1912. Postally unused.





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10 AM TO 5 PM

SATURDAY, AUGUST 29

10 AM TO 4 PM

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