

Article Courtesy of "*The Sou'wester*"

**History on the City of Raymond, Washington**  
***A residential lumber town at the forks of the Willapa River on Hwy. 101***

In February of 1853, Captain John Vail took a Donation Land Claim on the Willapa River in Riverdale, what is now the Northerly residential section of Raymond, after his ship, the *Willimantic*, wrecked off Grays Harbor. The homestead was known as the "Home and Orchard of the Vail Family" for many years after his death in 1856.

In 1865, Dr. Edward T. Balch, a retired English army surgeon, established his home on the South Fork of the Willapa River. Captain George Johnson bought the Perkins Brothers claim in 1875. Most of the Johnson's property was muddy tideland but the high ground came to be known as "Johnson's Island" while the family lived there. In 1892-93, the Northern Pacific Railroad laid tracks over the mudflats below the island on the way to the terminus at South Bend. Stella (Johnson) Raymond moved back to her father's property on the island (where she was born in 1875) with her husband Leslie V. Raymond in 1889.

In 1902-03, Alexander C. Little (former mayor of Aberdeen, 1893) rowed a boat to the tide flats at the forks of the Willapa and decided to promote a town there. He immediately set to work attracting Jacob Siler and W.S. Cram to the site to build a sawmill, and approached L.V. Raymond about selling portions of his father-in-laws old homestead. L.V. Raymond, who was already selling land, liked Little's enthusiasm and formed a company called the Raymond Land and Improvement Company in November 1903 to survey a town site, sell property, build sawmills, and encourage the location of other industries in the town.

The post office department established an office on February 23, 1904, and named the office "Raymond" in honor of the first post master, L.V. Raymond. In October 1904, the Improvement Company filed a survey for the town of Raymond. An election on August 4, 1907, approved incorporation of the town and A.C. Little was elected mayor. In the early years, Raymond's business section and part of the residential section, was built on stilts five or six feet above the tidelands and sloughs which crisscrossed the site. Elevated sidewalks and streets connected most the buildings. Twice a day the tides washed away refuse under and around the town. In 1913, Raymond claimed a population of 6,000 and had a reputation as a wild and wooly lumber mill town. City fathers resisted the unwanted recognition with promotions of Raymond as "The Empire City of Willapa Harbor", "The City That Does Things", and the "City of Smokestacks". Raymond's most active years were from 1912 to 1932, when twenty mills and factories lined the waterfront. Today, a single high technology sawmill dominates the Raymond waterfront.



Stella & L.V. Raymond  
Founders of Raymond, Washington