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**EARLY INDIAN
AVOIDED LAKE**

LOCATION AND SURROUNDINGS
NOT ATTRACTIVE THEN.

Wilbur F. Brock Writes About Early
Hot Lake History.

Wilbur F. Brock, well known in this county, but who lives at Lents, sets aright information about early history in the region of Hot Lake. Writing to the Oregonian, he says: Your contributor, John W. Ellsworth, in The Oregonian today states known and generally recognized facts in declaring that Medical Lake, near Spokane Wash., and Medical Springs, near Union, Or., were popular health resorts for the present generations of Indians, and their immediate ancestors; also for the tribes of the stone age that preceded our present known redskins.

Mr. Ellsworth, in the same article, asks for information as to ancient use of the waters of Hot Lake, near La Grande, from Indian sources. In reply to him I will state that I have interviewed more than 30 Cayuse, Umatilla, Walla Walla, Nez Perce and Snake River Indians and all declare that, up to the time of the coming of the white men, Hot Lake, near La Grande, was not used by the Indians. The Indians tell me that they know of the existence of these hot springs but that these springs in their wild state were not easy to approach; that the locality was marshy and not inviting for camping.

Medical Springs, a few miles to the east, were more easily appropriated; the locality better for game, fish and pasturage, and therefore were chosen as a rendezvous by the Indians. Furthermore, Medical Springs was more easily fortified by those in possession than Hot Lake, on account of the character and contour of surrounding country. And security plays an important part with open-air livers in choosing a camping place.

On this phase of the controversy it must be remembered that the upper end of the Grand Ronde Valley, where Hot Lake and Hot Springs are located in the open, was the common battleground, often used, where men in conflict the Snakes and Piutes in opposition to the Columbia River (Cayuses, Umatillas, Walla Wallas and Nez Percés) Indians.

Because of its warm, loamy, damp and sandy river meadows the Grande Ronde Valley afforded the best camas beds to be found in the West. From the earliest times, according to their traditions, to the coming of the white men the Indians of all tribes within a radius of 500 miles have made pilgrimages to the Grande Ronde valley for the camas roots, which formed their staff of life.

Because of their proximity the tribes of the Wallowa (Nez Percés) and of the Umatilla (Cayuses, Umatillas and Walla Wallas) claimed suzerainty over the Grande Ronde Valley. Because of intermarriage of the tribes just mentioned with the Yakimas, Palouses and Spokanes, the latter were allowed occasional use of the camas fields and pastures of the Grande Ronde.

When bands of Shoshones and Piutes and co-relating tribes of the Upper Snake River country came into the Grande Ronde Valley they were driven off by the Indians who generally were near by. It is related that in about 1899 A. D. a battle began in the Grande Ronde and ended near the head of Looking Glass, in which more than 700 Umatilla and Walla Walla Indians were massacred by combined tribes from the Upper Snake River country. This was in relation for a long succession of defeats which small parties of Snakes had suffered.

For more than 30 years I have been in touch with the Indian families who visit the Grande Ronde valley. The Brock Meadows, which for many years I have owned, are used every year by several Indian families. On these meadows for nearly 30 years I have met nearly every summer the chiefs of the Columbia River tribes, some of them old men whose memory runs back very near the coming of Lewis and Clark, and these skookum tyees have conversed with me freely upon the history and traditions of the Grand Ronde country. If these statements show that I have been



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misinformed I would be glad to be corrected.

Now to summarize: Lot Lake and Hot Lake Springs were not used by the Indians for medical purposes, because of (1) difficulty of access; (2) unfavorable campgrounds in the wild state; (3) windiness of the spot, caused by surrounding high hills; (4) the exposed position of Hot Lake to incoming war parties of hostiles from the Upper Snake River country. This is no argument against the medical value of the water, which for many ailments, is the most curative water known on this coast.

WILBUR F. BROCK.

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