

# The Good Ol' Days

By Tobie Finzel

## Native Americans of the Upper Nehalem

Local resident Jim Prout's recent discovery of a beautifully crafted obsidian scraper added to the mystery of the lives of the Native Americans who passed through here before the area was settled by white farmers.

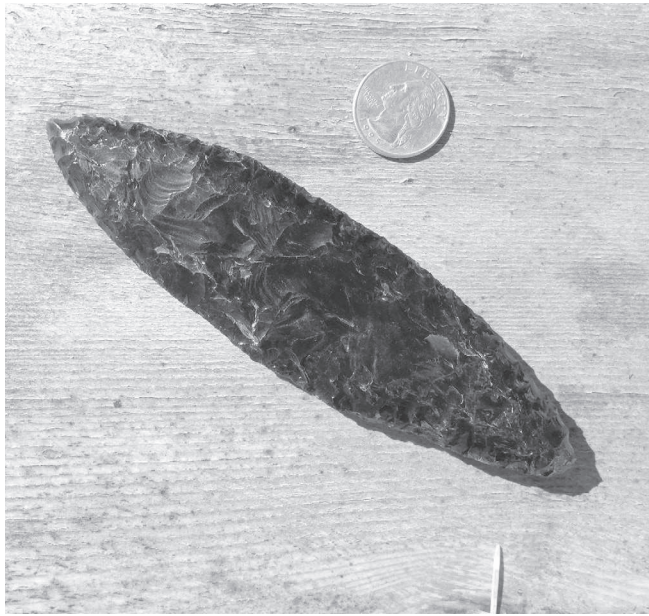
Due to the dense forests that covered most of what is now Vernonia, there would have been little to hunt except small game along the banks of the Nehalem River and its tributaries and perhaps deer and elk in larger clearings. The assumption is that small bands moved through here seasonally following the salmon runs and gathering berries and roots.

Artifacts such as arrowheads and a few stone scrapers are occasionally found along the river but none, to our knowledge, in any concentration that would evidence a more permanent settlement. The Columbia River was a heavily traveled trade route for centuries before British and Americans settled in the region, and the inland and Columbia River tribes were known to exchange goods periodically. Jim's obsidian scraper most likely came from tribes in Central Oregon or beyond and found its way to the Lower Columbia.

The Clatskanies (also known as Tlatskanai) inhabited the Upper Nehalem region but only seasonally extended to the Columbia near the present city of Clatskanie. Their language was in the Athapaskan family, unique in this part of the state from the mostly Chinookan language speaking tribes along the Lower Columbia and coastal Salish. What the Clatskanie called themselves in their native language is unknown; the name is from the Chinookan tongue meaning "those of the region of small oaks." Their territory covered most of the inland sections of Columbia and Clatsop counties near the Nehalem, primarily in the Mist and Birkenfeld area. The center of their territory could be reached by ascending either the

Klaskanine River in Clatsop County or Columbia County's Clatskanie River. These two distinct rivers were so named by the white settlers for the tribe that lived between the two rivers.

The Clatskanies built cedar longhouses that lodged multiple families and subsisted on game, roots and berries. Men wore fur robes in winter and no footwear or clothing in the warmer months; women wore skirts made of cedar bark. They were known to be fierce and hostile to others who came into their lands. According to historian Oscar Weed, son of Judson Weed, part of the first wave of Vernonia settlers, "entry



This Native American obsidian scraper was recently discovered by local resident Jim Prout.

was not made by white people except under heavy guard of soldiers who were stationed at Clatskanie." Remnants of old seasonal campsites were found by early settlers in the 1870s along what is now Timber Route near the Vernonia Airport, but by then no native Clatskanies were left in the county.

Numbering only 175 in 1825, the Clatskanies were nearly extinct by 1851 with only thirteen remaining. An unknown disease, now thought to be malaria, was brought into the Lower Columbia in 1830 by the trading ship Owyhee. With this and other epidemics, over 90 percent of the Chinookan peoples died during the 1830s. The inland tribes were a bit more isolated and hardy, but they also succumbed to white men's diseases. Prior to European contact, the Lower Columbia was one of the most densely populated areas of Native North America north of Mexico.

Other native tribes may also have passed through the area over the centuries from the coast or the Tualatin Valley on hunting or fishing forays, but who lost that obsidian scraper, certainly a prized possession, is shrouded in the mists of time.

### From Virgil Powell's Diary

Virgil Powell (1887-1963) was a long-time resident whose family had a farm in the Upper Nehalem Valley between Natal and Pittsburg. Each year from 1906 until 1955, he kept a regular diary of his activities. Although he rarely mentions events that happen outside of the Upper Nehalem, note the April 18<sup>th</sup> (1906) comment.

Tuesday, April 17, 1906: Carried mail to Mist. Got up to Natal School before taken up after dinner. Supposed to have been heaviest mail in U.S. sack that ever went. Very fine day, got home at 3:15 P.M. Brought bear trap up.

Wednesday, April 18: Sowed oats in morning. Harrowed all day. Cool and cloudy all day. Big earthquake at San Francisco, California.

Thursday, April 19: Harrowed with disc harrow all day. Lloyd went down and brought his wife home. George Parker was running shingle bolts. Very warm all day.

Friday, April 20: Went over the oat ground with drag, did not get quite done. Very

warm all day. Very smoky in evening.

Saturday, April 21: Carried the mail. Cloudy and looks very much like rain. Grange day at Natal.

Sunday, April 22: Went down to Natal and played ball. Got home at 6 P.M. Cloudy and looks very much like rain.

Monday, April 23: Finished clod mashing oat ground. Took bicycle ride in afternoon. Mr. Ballard went out to Clatskanie.

Tuesday, April 24: Carried the mail. Rained most all day. Mr. Wolford is painting the Pringle School house.

The Vernonia Pioneer Museum is located at E. 511 Bridge Street and is open from 1 to 4 pm on Saturdays and Sundays (excluding holidays) all year. From June through mid-September, the museum is also open on Fridays from 1 - 4 pm. There is no charge for admission but donations are always welcome. Become a member of the museum for an annual \$5 fee to receive the periodic newsletter. We now have a page on the Vernonia Hands on Art website, [www.vernoniahansonart.org](http://www.vernoniahansonart.org) If you are a Facebook user, check out the Vernonia Pioneer Museum page. The museum volunteers are always pleased to enlist additional volunteers to help hold the museum open and assist in other ways. Please stop by and let one of the volunteers know of your interest in helping out.

## Vernonia Marathon and Half Marathon Results

Runners from around the region and the country ran in the Vernonia Marathon and Half Marathon on Sunday, April 10, 2016.

The race started in Vernonia at Cedar Ridge and traveled down the Linear Trail to Stub Stewart State Park. The Marathon continued on to Banks High school.

Several local runners competed in the Marathon and Half Marathon. Jennifer Draeger was the top local finisher in the Marathon, finishing 68<sup>th</sup> overall and 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Female 35-39 group with a time of 3:58:45. Andrea Grant and Heather

Gleason also completed the marathon.

Derek Handegard finished 44<sup>th</sup> overall in the Half Marathon and 5<sup>th</sup> in the Male 45-49 age group with a time of 1:35:56. Tim Becken finished 76<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> in the Male 50-54 group with a time of 1:42:32. Nicole McWhirter was the top local woman, finishing 226<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> in the Female 30-34 group with a time of 2:00:28. Other locals who ran in the Half Marathon were Sam Poetter, Sue Vandehey, Brian Nelson, Michelle McCullough, Steven Rickards, Jane Clemo, and Jessica Nelson.

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