

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND LABOR BUREAU OF THE CENSUS  
THIRTIETH CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES: 1910 - INDIAN POPULATION

Special Inquiries Relating to Indians

Name	Sex	Age	Color	Place of Birth	Date of Birth	Number of Years in U.S.		Religion	Education	Occupation	Value of Real Estate	Value of Personal Estate	Total Value
						U.S.	Foreign						
Frank Barnes	M	37	W	Calaveras, Cal.	1857	53	0	None	None	None	None	None	None
John Sulkey	M	47	W	Calaveras, Cal.	1858	52	0	None	None	None	None	None	None

# Yamel Indians Lived Here

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A search of the 1910 United States Census turned up five people of Yamel descent. This page, from the Polk County/Grand Ronde portion of that census, cited two: a Frank Barnes born in 1857 and a John Sulkey, born in 1888.



William Hartless, a Mary's River Indian and a major source of information about the Yamel Bands.

Photo courtesy of CTGR Cultural Resources Department, Smithsonian Institution 4310-2

rent locations of Dallas and West Salem and on the east by the Willamette River. (38 — *The Kalapuyans*)

The Oregon county and river, both named Yamhill, were each derived from the Yamel Bands of Indians, according to Olson.

The "Yamels," (23 — *The Kalapuyans*) have been all but extinct since the mid-1800s, but according to Olson, the Yamels likely live on in Tribal members today.

An indication of just how far from Tribal memory the Yamels had faded, however, came in CTGR's "Notice of Proposed Membership Roll," submitted to the Department of the Interior in 1955 at the time of Termination. This was the last time the Tribe included prior Tribal affiliations in a list of members, and not a single name of the 882 submitted was presented as a descendant of the Yamhill Tribe.

The proposed roll should not be considered complete, however, according to Olson, because at the time, Indians were not asked to give a second level of Tribal affiliation, meaning that it was enough that they were Kalapuyans; they were not asked to specify which band of Kalapuyans, and in fact, many names on the list stop after citing their Kalapuyan forerunners.

The Yamels faced far bigger challenges starting almost two centuries earlier.

A series of epidemics coming with white settlers principally explain their demise. It didn't help that Kalapuyans also faced on-going attacks from both these same settlers and also from other Tribes.

The Kalapuyans were not known to be warlike and did not partake in scalping, according to Hartless, but war appears to have been a fact of their lives.

For example, Hartless reported that the Kalapuyans as a whole did not have a chief over all the related Tribes and bands, but that each Tribe or Band had three chiefs, with two acting principally as "go betweens," while the third stayed in the village. "Only in case of war did he leave his resident village" (39 — *The Kalapuyans*).

Hartless also reported that Kalapuyans used red, white and black stripes for war paint (41 —

*The Kalapuyans*), presumably to fend off attacks.

Anthropologist Albert S. Gatschet reported in 1899 in *The Journal of American Folklore* (based on his 1877 interviews at the Grand Ronde Reservation) that the Kalapuyans "were not warlike, and are not known to have participated in any war expeditions. The coast Tribes of the Alsi and the other Tribes now gathered upon the Siletz or Coast Reservation kept them in terror" (23 — *The Kalapuyans*).

The Kalapuyans not only feared coastal Tribes but also the Klamaths from the south, according to a 1919 article in the *Cottage Grove Sentinel* (32 — *The Kalapuyans*).

These other Tribes made frequent drives into Kalapuyan territory in the northern Valley. As the Yamels died out, the Tillamooks were said to have spent ever more winter time in the relatively better valley weather.

While it is not unreasonable to suggest that appropriate federal action could have saved threatened Native Bands, the political will of a public wildly against Natives and frequently embarked on efforts to exterminate them played a dominant role following the near extinction brought on by disease.

Even Joel Palmer, Indian Agent for the area, talked about "reckless and evil-disposed whites." What happened to the Yamels in the Willamette Valley stands among countless examples of what has happened to aboriginal peoples throughout Oregon and beyond.

### DEATH FROM DISEASE

Two epidemics struck Tribal members beginning with the small-pox epidemic which swept into the Pacific Northwest from Missouri in 1782-83. Estimates are that it killed 2,000 of 3,000 existing Kalapuyans (21 — *The Kalapuyans*).

In 1805, the Lewis and Clark expedition reached the West Coast and reported some venereal disease among Columbia River Tribes, and although the Lewis and Clark report does not regard it as an epidemic, historians and adventurers since have reported that it played a role, along with "the effects of exposure to wet weather, and for the want of food," according to

an American missionary visiting Joseph Gervais, one of the first settlers of the Willamette Valley (21-22 — *The Kalapuyans*).

An 1814 diary by a fur trader, Alexander Henry, recounted in the Mackey book, described the Yamhills as an ugly, ill-formed race, and four of them had some defect of the eyes... Those we met were wretchedly clothed in deerskins; their quivers were of deer's heads and necks. Their women had petticoats of fringed leather, like the Chinook women's cedar petticoats, but reaching only halfway down the thighs. They wore small round bonnets of wattap [Probably a reed and/or grass combination, similar to the hats worn by coastal tribes.] with a peak three inches high. They were of short stature, and altogether the most miserable, wild, and rascally looking Tribe I have seen on this side of the Rocky Mountains (2 — *The Kalapuyans*).

The eye problems referred to are "consistent with inbreeding," said Merle Holmes, in his last interview. "You're not looking at the cream of the crop (among those left after the succession of epidemics)," he added.

From 1830-33, a second epidemic variously called "intermittent fever" or "ague," "viral influenza" or "malaria" took out 75-95 percent of those villages it hit, often wiping out everyone in a village. One observer wrote, "Their habit was, when the fever came on, to plunge themselves into the water; which proved fatal to them" (22 — *The Kalapuyans*).

As much as 90 percent of the Tribe is thought to have been wiped out by these diseases (22 — *The Kalapuyans*).

An 1849 report by Oregon Territory Governor Joseph Lane quoted in Mackey's book said, "The Yam Hill Indians are a small Tribe who claim the country drained by a river of that name, which is mostly taken up by the whites; they are poor; have a few horses; are poorly armed, and are well disposed. They number about 90; of whom 19 are warriors" (92 — *The Kalapuyans*).

Local historian Dennis Werth, from his readings, believes the Yamel Band was "just about wiped out by the 1840s." He cites the story in J.C. Cooper's fictional book, *The Yamhills*, to suggest the poor state the Yamels were in by then by noting that Tillamook Indians were living in the valley by the 1850s in a "well-established, huge, urban complex, with living for 400."

"You don't go to another's territory unless they're sick or frightened," said Werth.

Cooper lived in McMinnville when he published his book in 1904. Werth called him a "mover and shaker" for the period who pulled together a lot of reliable information for the book.

*The Yamhills*, subtitled, "an Indian Romance," suggests that the Tillamooks returned to the valley seasonally, "when the weather on the coast got bad in winter."

A 1955 analysis by S.F. Cook said that whatever the number or percentage of fatalities from disease, "The Indians as an effective social and biological organism were destroyed in the lower valleys of the Columbia and Willamette rivers" (22 — *The Kalapuyans*).

### LANGUAGE

Historians often group the Yamels among the Kalapuyans not only because geographically, they lived within the territory occupied by other Kalapuyans, but because linguists also suggest that the Yamel languages fit within the same language family.

On the other hand, according to an 1884 statement by Oregon physician W.W. Oglesby, who reported what he had learned from "Cheoneisheon," a Chief of the Kalapuyans: "The language of some ten or thirteen Tribes or families of Indians in Oregon is all different — they all speak a different language. There are not two Tribes or families of Indians that speak the same language... Even those who lived very near each other — within a short distance from each other — within a day's ride of each other — their town would have a different language" (28-29 — *The Kalapuyans*).

### THE YAMELS' LIVES, DAY TO DAY

On a great variety of subjects, Mackey's book provides a wealth of information about the Kalapuyans:

Doctors, in those days, had a useful way of charging patients: "No cure, no fee," said Hartless (40 — *The Kalapuyans*).

Marriage was in part a business deal, according to both Gatschet and Hartless. The price, however, was "an indemnity given by the bridegroom to her relations for the daily work or other services which the bride will henceforth no longer

render to her family," reported Gatschet (24 — *The Kalapuyans*).

In 1872, according to June Olson, the federal government banned traditional Indian marriages and required they be held in dominant culture churches.

No marriage was allowed within families, according to Hartless, except that men were obligated to marry their wife's sister. "A good man was given that sister free of charge. He could not refuse her." And men could have many wives both within and outside of their Tribe. (40 — *The Kalapuyans*).

"Not all marriages were necessarily sexual in nature," said Olson. "The Chief is protector of the family or village." Sometimes, she added, Chiefs would marry to keep a young woman within the community, or to confer status upon her.

Tribes or Bands communicated with interpreters who learned other Tribal languages through inter-marriage or during a time they were held captive by another Tribe, said Oglesby (28-29 — *The Kalapuyans*).

The Indians considered "a falsehood or lie or to deceive each other as the greatest crime they could be guilty of," according to Oglesby. "It was very seldom that an Indian ever told anything but the truth, he said, until the whites came among them and they became acquainted with them" (28 — *The Kalapuyans*).

They made their canoes out of whole trees, using cedar, white-fir or cottonwood varieties, according to Hartless. The canoes were between 14-30 feet long, and either dug out by flint or burned out providing seating capacities for 4-30 people (42 — *The Kalapuyans*).

Drums, gongs, rattles and bells were used as musical instruments (42-43 — *The Kalapuyans*).

Tobacco was the only crop they planted. They burned rotten logs as a base and placed the seeds in "without spading" (44 — *The Kalapuyans*).

Camas was a favored food," according to Stephen Dow Beckham's book, *The Indians of Western Oregon*. "This blue lily grew in great meadows along the edges of small streams and in clearings in the forests throughout the region. For many hours each year the women and girls labored in the camas fields with their digging sticks. Prying back on the antler handles, they twisted the stick into the earth to lay bare the prized bulbs. The placed the camas in earthen ovens lined with fire-heated rocks. They cov-

ered the bulbs with layers of leaves and closed the oven with a mat and earth and allowed the camas to bake two or three days. When they removed the cooked bulbs, they were ready to eat immediately or to dry in the sun and be packed into large loaves to be stored until later in the year" (48-49 — *The Indians of Western Oregon*).

### A YAMEL MYTH

The place about as close as one gets to the end of a people came in 1914 when Mrs. Louisa Selky, "the last of the native speakers of Yamhill," (199 — *Kalapuya Texts*) dictated a Yamhill myth to Dr. Leo J. Frachtenberg, a U.S. government linguist, at Grand Ronde. The myth was printed in a 1945 University of Washington Anthropology book called, *Kalapuya Texts*.

The myth, "Coyote follows his (entrails) daughter to the land of the dead," seems particularly apt in light of the fate faced by Yamels and so many Natives across America. In Native myths, coyote represented "Trickster, transformer, culture hero, traitor to own kind." And cougar was defined as "hero yet treacherous" (80 — *The Kalapuyans*).

In this apparently unfinished myth, Coyote hunted and killed Gopher, and wished a daughter to life from Gopher's entrails. Cougar wanted the daughter, and brought her home, but the daughter did not want anything from Cougar. Cougar turned some marrow bones, a delicacy offered to and declined by the daughter, into wildcherry, but Coyote insisted she have it. When the daughter ate the wildcherry, it choked her and she died. Coyote followed her to the land of the dead, requiring a canoe over the water to the land of the dead. Once there, Coyote killed and skinned five dead people's elks, threw away the meat and kept the bones for the rest of the journey. And the narrative breaks off here: "Then it became dark, and now the dead people danced again..." (203 — *Kalapuya Texts*).

### HOW THE LAND WAS LOST

The 1851 Treaties with Kalapuyan Bands were signed in what is today Champeog Park. In the case of the Yamels, they brought together the remnants of "the Yamhill Band of the Callapooya