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Pages From Our Past

By Kenneth L. Holmes, writer historian

INDIAN NAMES ON THE LAND

The story in "PAGES FROM OUR PAST" about Chief Seattle and the city named for him brought an unexpected response from our readers. One of them, J. F. (Jake) Jacobson, an 82-year young man from Eugene, wrote asking about Chief "Sealth," about whom he had heard over the years. The answer to his question is that Chief Seattle and Chief Sealth were one and the same person. Roberta Watt, in her book, The Story of Seattle, puts it this way: "The name, as we pronounce it, is a corruption of the original 'Sealth' pronounced with a guttural sound that only an Indian can utter. 'Seattle' was easier for the white man's tongue; so Seattle it became."

This brings up the whole matter of the difficulty the white man had in transliterating into English the Indian words. There was no written languages. Added to this, the Indian languages and dialects were legion. Oscar Winther, in his book, The Great Northwest, says, "Areas of greatest linguistic diversity in native North America were California, the central part of the Gulf of Mexico coast, and the Pacific Northwest. In the last-named region twenty unrelated language families are represented by one or more language. The total number of mutually unintelligible languages spoken in the Pacific Northwest amounted to at least fifty-six." In addition to this babel of tongues there was a useful trade language called the Chinook Jargon, a combination of several Indian tongues, with the later addition of corrupted English, French and possibly Russian words.

The Indian spoke with many guttural sounds and such combinations as "tl," which are difficult to transpose into English. Besides this there were different English accents among the explorers, fur traders and settlers. There were Englishmen and Scots, and there were differing American accents. This made for difficulties which were reflected in several tempests in teapots in earlier days. One of the most argued words was Willamette. I have seen letters from the old-timers to each other and to newspaper editors hotly contesting the spelling of this word. I have seen it spelled Wallamette, Wallamet, Willamette, Wallamitte, and Walhammet. H. S. Lyman long ago said that the real Indian word was "al-lam-t," designating a particular spot on the bank of the river near present Oregon City. He said the Indians accented the first syllable, and there were only two syllables.

Another word that has been debated is Champoege, the place on the shore of the Willamette river where the Hudson's Bay company stored wheat and the locale of the first government in the Oregon Country. Some say the word came from "Campment du Sable," "place of sand," but Louis LaBonte, one of the pioneer French settlers said that the name was "purely Indian." The "Cha" sound is the same as the Indian prefix on words such as Chelam, Chemeketa, Chemawa. "Poeg" meant a plant or root found there and desired by the Indians: Its pronunciation would be SHAHM-POH-EGG, and not SHAM-POO-EE, as some say.

Other problem words in the Willamette valley were Yamhill, the name for a tribe, usually pro-

nounced "Yam-il"; Tualatin, often spelled "Tualaty" or "Tollity" by the pioneers; "Clatskanie," which should be "Tlats-kani," according to Lyman. There are lots of other Indian names in Oregon nomenclature: Clatsop, Chinook, Tillamook, Nehalem, Yaquina, Multnomah, etc.

In Washington State two debated words have been Spokane, which in the face of all tradition I have found spelled "Spokein," by one of our early explorers, and Sequim, which is naturally pronounced "Squim." The pioneers of Washington saw to it that many more Indian names became permanent features on their map than was the case among Oregonians. Of the 37 county names in Washington, sixteen are derived from Indian words: Asotin, Chehalis, Chelan, Cowlitz, Kitsap, Kittitas, Klickitat, Okanogan, Skagit, Skamania, Snohomish, Spokane, Wahkiakum, Whatcom and Yakima.

PAUL BUNYAN IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

For years I've heard rumors that Paul Bunyan, the mighty giant of logger folklore, finally got to the Pacific Northwest. Supposedly Babe, the Great Blue Ox, died at the shores of Puget Sound, and that they made a great roundhouse in Seattle from his ribs. I heard, too, that Babe's burial mound is the Olympic Mountains. There seemed to be some evidence also that Crater Lake was filled by Paul Bunyan during the Winter of the Blue Snow, and that accounts for the intense blue color of the lake.

As a historian naturally I wanted to get at the bottom of this problem and so sought out some of the authorities on the subject. James Stevens, in his book, "Paul Bunyan," published in 1925, just got Paul into the Inland Empire, which he called "The He Man Country." Ida Turney, in the finest Paul Bunyan book for kids, "Paul Bunyan, The Work Giant," published by Binfords and Mort in Portland (1941), hardly gets him into our area. Wallace Wadsworth in what is otherwise an admirable treatment of the subject in "Paul Bunyan and his Great Blue Ox," (1926), has the audacity to say that historians have not studied the matter because they "have not had the time to pay much attention to the lesser things which he accomplished in Washington and Oregon." It was not until I found Esther Sheperd's "Paul Bunyan," published by Harcourt, Brace and Company (1924), that I found that these "lesser things" were really magnificent projects. Let me tell you about some of them.

Paul Bunyan was born, you know, on the shores of Maine, and during his life moved west. He did a lot of logging around the Great Lakes region and then started west once more. Somehow he got lost "somewhere between Fargo and Seattle," and he wandered off to the south, dragging his peavey along behind. The ditch that he gouged out, of course, is now the Grand Canyon.

My first job was in the Inland Empire, east of the Cascades. There he found a vast inland sea with a large island in the northwest corner. The shores and the island were covered with the "biggest trees you ever saw." They were so tall "they took on some of the color of the sky and was blue

Jamboree Parade Brings Record Number of Entries



The Jamboree parade this year had 74 entries, the most for any parade to date. There were 62 entries judged, plus the Marine Corps color guard, six autos and dignitaries and five entries which did not register. Entries pictured above are, from left to right, first row: Christian church float, Curl family entry in kids division; second row: Columbia county dairy princess, Pat Kallberg of Scappoose, Vernonia Milk Farms float, Lions club float; third row: the Jamboree court, Princess Patti Chandler in foreground; Vernonia high school drill team and band; fourth row: Cub Scout float, Curl Grocery float; fifth row: Scappoose Pow Wow court, the Space Sweethearts, Keep Oregon float which was part of the Clatskanie entry, the beach buggy of Allen Fowler decorated and entered by the JayCoes group; bottom, Ralph's Chevron Service, featuring the Ralph Sturdevant children as Little Miss Muffet and the spider, Little Boy Blue under the haystack and Mistress Mary.

about half way down their branches." When he had all the logs cut and fastened together in a giant raft, then he went down to the southwest corner of the lake and plowed out an outlet for it and rafted the logs right up to the sea. That's one story of how he made the Columbia gorge. And that's the right one too.

There are a couple of others, but they don't seem to hold much water. One of the other stories tells how Paul was having Babe, the Blue Ox, pull a big log chain into a solid bar that he wanted, and the bar broke, and Babe could

not stop pulling and ran clear to Actoria pulling it behind him. The scratch he made is the Columbia gorge. One group of loggers holds that Paul dug out the gorge with tame mountain goats, proof of which is that there are not mountain goats south of the river. They all happened to be working on the north side when Paul Bunyan turned the water lose into the gorge.

About this time Paul built Mt. Hood as a lookout for his operation. It was probably about this time, too, that he made Crater Lake as we told you before.

His next project was to dig the Puget Sound. He got a great big scraper to drag behind Babe, but that wasn't big enough, so Paul went up to Alaska and brought back a glacier that helped him get the job done. Old Man Rainier and Old Man Puget were supposed to pay Paul in money and with a trainload of his favorite tobacco, but they tried to cheat him out of his money and tobacco, and Paul got mad and threw some shovel loads of dirt back into the Sound, and that's how the San Juan islands got made. He took the dirt from Bellingham bay and piled it

up to make Mt. Baker.

Well, now you see what historical research will do. Now we know some of the truth of the matter. Paul Bunyan did get into the Pacific Northwest, and we have all these great scenic wonders to prove it.

Billy: "Why doesn't your little lamb follow you to school any more Mary?"

Mary: "At 50 miles an hour?"