

## NATIVE NAMES

Don Whereat (March, 1996)

Driving the coast highway in Oregon you may have wondered about some of the names encountered; names such as Lake's Tackenitch, Siltcoos, Cleowox; and Woahink; and towns with strange names such as Yachats, Nehalem, and Tillamook. Where did these names come from? They certainly don't have the familiar ring of English.

The names Tachenitch and Siltcoos most likely came from seasonal camps at the mouths of the two outlets, and were known as Tsahineetch and Tsiltchoos before the arrival of the European's. At the time this was written in 1996, it was believed that the Natives did not name bodies of water. Since that time I have learned that, at least, the Lower Umpqua's and Siuslaw's did. The names Woahink and Cleowox had been suspect as importations as was Clear Lake. Even Reedsport's reservoir turned up with an Indian name, Bonowahus. The two Indians working for surveyor Harvey Gordon did not know the meaning of the names, or Gordon was not interested.<sup>1</sup> Some of the later day Siuslaw's said that Tsachenitch meant "many arms,"

Do these names sound familiar: "Kil-la-muck," "Luck-ton," "Ka-hun-kle," "Lick-a-wis," "Yorick-cone," "Neck-e-toe," "Il-se-a," "You-ilt," "She-astuck-le," "Kil-la-wat," "Cook-koo-oose?" They represent tribal names that are in the area of a tribe's residence, or claimed territory, and are from the journals of Lewis and Clark.

The first tribe south of the Tillamook was the "Luck-ton's," no doubt the Nestuccas. Then came the "Ka-hun-kle's" (Salishans), "Lick-a-wis" and "Yorick-cone's" (Yaquina's, which includes the Siletz). The Siletz were the "Selecta" band, or "Shileshitch." That word means "crooked," and is an accurate description of that river. The Siletz were nicknamed "Yats'aghithna" at the time of the reservation period. It means "driven-out Indians," This term was used both in pity and reproach, and meant something worse than slave. The Siuslaw's, who were left in their old homeland, also called the Coos this. Not that they should have felt superior, because at that time the white people considered their land worthless.

Next in order were the "Neck-e-to's" and "Ul-se-ah's" (Al seas), "You-ilts" (Yahaches, who were also Alsea). The Alsea were the southern most bands of the Tillamook or Flathead Indians of the coast.

Next came the Siuslawan speakers, including both the "She-a stuck-le's" and "Kil-a-wats" (Siuslaw and Lower Umpqua). Umpqua actually refers to the upper river Athapascan speakers. The next group, the Coosan's, was Lewis and Clark's "Cook-koo-oose," and evidently referred to both the Hanis and Miluk of Coos Bay. The name is said to mean "southerners," just as "Gwasiya" (southerners) in the Hanis tongue refers

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<sup>1</sup> Harvey Gordon, 1857.

to the Coquilles and others to the south. The Coos language, as well as Alsea and Siuslawan, are classed under the Penutian family of languages.

Beyond the above names, it is difficult to identify Lewis and Clark's three tribal names below Coos Bay. "Shal-la-lah," which is the first tribe south of Coos Bay (Kowes Bay by some early writers) would be at the mouth of the Coquille. No current name in the literature comes even close to "Sha-la-lah," except for one of the Nasoma bands, "Kle-nah-a-hah." I can find nothing close for "Luck-kar-so" and "Han-na-kal-lal."

Sometimes confounding, the same names given by Lewis and Clark for the coast tribes will often be spelled, or even named, differently. A case in point is coastal tribal names furnished by Michel La Framboise, a French Canadian trapper with the Hudson Bay Company in the early 1800's. An Englishman, Dr. Gairdner (1835), obtained the following names from him.

"Naelim" (Nehalem), thirty miles south of Clatsop Point. "Nikaas" (Nestucca), next south, a branch of the Tillamook. Kowai and Neslitch are next. Neslitch would be Siletz, a branch of the Yaquina's. Tocoan, south of Neslitch is identified in the Handbook of American Indians as "Yaquina." The next three are the familiar Aleya (Alsea), Sayonstla (Siuslaw), and Kiliwatsal (Kelawatsat, or Lower Umpqua).

Gairdner listed the names in descending order and by language group, but here we run into trouble. The numbers twenty-five and twenty-six are listed as "Kaons and "Godamyou," the former which evidently should be Coos Bay, and "Godamyou the Sixes River tribe (Gua daman in the Coos language). (Alexander McCloud, in his 1826 trip called the Coquille River "Shequits". (An early map, 1859, McCormick & Pownell, has Sequealchin as a small stream between Floras creek and the Coquille river, and referred to a band camping at Floris Lake as "Goddamyou" , Laframbois, after his "Godamyou" lists ... "south of number twenty-five. "Siquitchib". (The latter two names both mean Sixes. The final tribal name, "Stotonia," is listed as being "south of number twenty-six, at the mouth of the "River des Coquins," meaning, "River of The Rascal's," (Rogue River) tagged that by the early Hudson Bay trappers traversing the Rogue valley on their way to and from the Sacramento valley in California. It is apparent that in the early days before eighteen-forty the streams below the Umpqua were not well known. If Lewis and Clark had arrived at some other place on the coast, we would be seeing completely different place names today. Each tribe had its own descriptive name for its neighbors. The Alsea for instance called the Siuslaw "Kwas" or "Kwasitslum", meaning "people of Kwas." They referred to themselves, "Wusitslum" (people of Whooshee, which name referring to the bay and river. The "people of" designation seems to have been used by the tribes north of the Coos and Siuslawns. For instance, the Nestucca's were "Stahgah-ush," or people of the Stahgah, and one of the other names the Tillamook's used for the Alsea's was a word that meant "further beach people." Siuslaw's referred to their northern neighbors as "Northerners," and people to the south as "Southerners." Coos and Coquille's were the "Kwisee," southerners. This custom was also used by the Coos.

Another name for the Coquille River is "Mishi," given by Coquille Thompson and

Old Solomon. <sup>2</sup>The upper Coquilles were the "Mishi-qute-me-tunne," or "the people dwelling on the river Mishi." Tunne, tene, tini, tony, means "people" or "person," in the Athapaskan language, and similarly, "Meh" and "Kah," again the word for people, is at the end of Hanis and Miluk respectively. For instance, the Hanis Coos as "Chel-lay-ye meh," and upper Coquille's, as "Kwayitch'ma" knew the Lower Umpqua. The Coquille Athapascans as "Mushin't-ah tunne" knew Coos. (The "" as used here is a glottal stop)

For our neighbors to the south (of Coos Bay) there is a name for every tribe and band, but they are all of Athapascan origin except for one, and they were the Nasoma (Miluk speakers) It is evident the Athapascan's were encroaching on them. Coquille Thompson was an upper Coquille (Athapasscan), born in the village that was at the junction of the middle and south forks of that river. He was probably no more than 6 or 7 years old<sup>3</sup> when his people were removed to Siletz, and unfortunately, it appears he never came back to visit his old homeland. If he had, his memories for places might have been clearer. He furnished many names, but was unsure where most of them were placed. Following are the names he gave Harrington in ca 1942 for villages near the mouth of the Coquille River. These did not speak his Athapascan language, but the names he used are of his language. The reason for this discrepancy is there had been two Athapascan groups moving in on the Coquille over the years, from the north and south. Although each group spoke the same mother tongue, the dialects were different.

They were "Nasoma-tunne," "Kamahs-dan," and "Dulmushi." He said Kamahs-dan was on the south bank; "Dulmushi" on the south bank and opposite and several miles upriver. On August 3rd. 1855, the "Nas-o-ma" signed the Coast Treaty. One of the four bands signing was the "Ke-ah-mes-e-ton" band, which would have been the "Kamahs-dan" of Thompson. Further corroboration for these three comes from a reference to the burning of the Nasoma village in January 1854.... "The Indian village is in three different parts, situated on both sides of the river, about one and a half miles from the mouth." Thompson also referred to the mouth of the river as "Mishi-hoot," which again illustrates the multitude of names for the same place, or area. Although Thompson gave only three names to Harrington, four signed the treaty in 1855. The official treaty of August 3, 1855 reads "(four) bands of the Nas-o-mah or Coquille tribe of Indians...." In a letter to George Gibbs dated June 19, 1855, Lt. Kautz<sup>4</sup> had this to say about the Lower Coquille, "The Band at the mouth of the Coquille seems to be on the boundary line between two distinct Nations as this Band has two languages in use. Some can speak both, but they have members, obtained by inter-marriage perhaps, who speaks only one, according as they have been obtained from the North or South." From J.O. Dorsey's 1884 Coquille word list, "Na-su-mi. a Lower Coquille village, south side, language differs from that of the Miciquitme."

Between the Coquille and Port Orford, one most often sees the name "Quatomah" for that region. Harrington (John P. Harrington, Anthropologist for the Smithsonian) said that the ancient name for the mouth of Flores Creek was "Koseecha."

<sup>2</sup> J.O.Dorsey at Siletz, 1884.

<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth Jacobs, Ethnography Notebook 120, pg.3.

<sup>4</sup> In charge of an Army Unit stationed at Port Orford.

("Cha" or mouth) also "Coso-ony," "people of "Coso" is probably where "Quatoma" comes from."Kwatuhma," another version, is said to be the name of the lagoon at the mouth of Flores creek.

Next were the Sixes, or "Sequachee." Thompson gave "Gwah-dah-me denne," and La Framboise' "Godamyou." Another name for Sixes is Sugway-me, Thompson insisting "Gwah-dah-me was just another name for that. Other names are "Kwatami" and "Suk-kwe-tce" (sixes mouth) of Owen Dorsey. (Sequalchin River-Abbott to Gibbs, 1858). Because the Sixes were a strong tribe, they would have been well known to La Framboise. In May of 1862, "Sixes George" addressed Oregon Superintendent Wm. H. Rector, in part, "We were in 3 tribes, and each tribe had their own Chief. Our country bordered on the Coquille River ..."

None of the informants for Harrington seemed to agree on a name for the Elk River band, they being a small group of not much significance. Tagonecia, a Port Orford Chief appears to have held sway over them. Thompson gave the name "Gusuma" for Elk River., which could possibly be another version of "Quatoma." Again, we must remember that Thompson was not physically familiar with the areas he was describing.

Native names for Port Orford are all un-pronounceable, but all mean "the people at the Heads," or "Point." The band that occupied this area was at the southern end of the "Quatoma" territory.

The next tribe of note was the Euchre Creek's, or "Eu-qua-chees," or "Yugwee-che," a warlike band who constantly fought with a Rogue River Tribe (Dotodin).<sup>5</sup> The Rogue River early on was often confused with the Klamath River (California.) The tribe on both sides of the mouth were said to have been given the name "Joshua's" by the early whites. Known today as "Yashutes," it was probably how the natives tried to pronounce "Joshua." There are several instances where the white people garbled a native name, and in turn the natives garbled that, and what we think today is the "real old native" term can be far from it. An example was an Indian by the name of 'Jahotch' or Jahagh.' I thought it was his Indian name until I discovered it was really 'George' they were trying to pronounce. The name Too-tooto-ney comes from a village several miles up the Rogue River on the north side, "Dotodin."

The next tribe of note are the "Wishtonatin's" or "Pistol River's," speaking a sub-dialect of Chetco. The river was called Pistol River by the whites because a soldier lost his pistol there.<sup>6</sup>

I will mention the tribe that used to inhabit the area of Whale's Head only because of an incident that happened back in some unknown time. The village was covered by a landslide, and if not eroded away, could yield the same kind of information as one of the Makah villages (Ozette) on the Olympic peninsula. The last major tribe on the south coast was the Chetco's. This tribe dominated as far as the Pistol River' on the north, and down to the California line. They spoke a northern dialect of the Smith River

<sup>5</sup> John Harrington, Field Notes, R26-F1151.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., R26-F720.

language of northern California. Coquille Thompson said 'Chetco' "is a white man's corruption of Chet-hoot, meaning the Chet River or creek." The Chetco's called themselves, and were so called by their neighbors, "Ahoos-tane," meaning southerners. In turn they used the term "da'aht'a-tene" to refer to their northern neighbors. The Chetco's were a powerful tribe and had many villages up river.

This article is but a brief discussion of native names and places in Oregon. Early linguists were in a hurry to record Indian languages before they were lost. Very few have been analyzed to any extent, thus we may learn more when these languages are studied more thoroughly.