

## Tietan basin

### Indians

The Tietan basin is a continual surprise. Its beauties, its legends its future possibilities all go to comprise a wonderland.

Years ago about the time the Catholic missionaries brought their image of the Savior and the Madonna to the Wintanum valley when the venturesome prospector and the pushing cattle raiser began to cross the side of the Columbia the Tietan was the summer camping grounds of the Indians.

Here the Yakimas, Klickitats, Snoqualmies, Warm Springs and Okanogans met in council.

Surrounding the basin are five mighty hills each one of a different color or tinge and in the center, towering above the others is a sixth hill of singular formation, a broad red stripe running down its center. There is an interesting legend connected with this.

The government formerly gave each of the tribes a different colored blanket. The color of the blanket of the Yakimas was green, of the Okanogan red and so through the list of tribes. Singularly enough the blankets correspond to the color of the five <sup>hills</sup> ~~to the~~ surrounding the basin and when the head chiefs of the council each tribe took the hill which matched the blankets while the head chief and his retinue occupied the center hill.

One summer while in annual encampment there were open mutterings about the arbitrary way the head chief and his unjust commands. The complaints increased and instead of mending his ways the chief plotted destruction of the five tribes.

As he was about to put his wicked scheme to work he was struck down by a thunderbolt from above and the blood which flowed from his wound dyed the red streak which now plainly marks the hill.

The Tietan basin was a favorite spot of the Indians for hundreds of miles around not only on account of its natural beauties and the prime fishing and hunting but on account of a spring which it was claimed had life giving qualities. This spring is beautifully located and is marked by a natural monument which rises perpendicular from the ground for a distance of over a thousand feet.

Judge J.B. Nelson has recently located on the land which embraces the spring and intends improving it for a summer resort. The distance is an easy eight hours ride from North Yakima. This water has never been analysed by a competent chemist but its properties include iron, soda and sulphur. It is a turbulent spring and boils and bubbles as though the uneasy spirit of the wicked old chieftain was doomed to imprisonment within. So cold is the water that its contact with the hand, even for a brief period, is painful. With the natural advantages there is no reason why there should not be a summer resort in the Tietan basin which would stimulate pilgrimage from all parts of the country and prove a great benefit to this town--

*Yakima Signal*  
The "Washington Farmer", August 2, 1885.

Tietan Park--.....On Mount Tacoma is seen to leap over the rim and fall, as it in gathered mist within the forest bank thousands of feet below ----The Tietan has ever been a sort of sacred spot among the Indians and many are the strange legends cling about the mountains and crags and springs and streams within the circling mountain walls.

One tall mountain that stands in the center of the group is supposed to have been the throne or abiding place of the Great Father . Each of the surrounding mountains represented the meeting place of some of the tribes of Indians. These mountains, owing to the peculiarities of composition are of different colors and these colors are believed to have represented the different colored blankets peculiar to their respective tribes.

Here it was the great chief was wont to call the tribes of men together, each to his tribal mountain and council with them "in the brave days of old." These were perhaps the same far off days when the morning stars sang together and when the Great Spirit was accustomed to visiting the nations of the far east in pillars of fire and on the tops of the great mountains----J.J . Adams, Spokane Falls Review, August, 1889.



Indians

Legends

A son of the first missionary among the Choctow Indians once related some of the primitive religious beliefs of the tribe says the Kansas City Star, among them a version of the great deluge which it was stated is one of their oldest legends.

Once, many years ago it was night over the whole country for a long time and everyone despaired. After waiting many months a streak of light was discovered far away in the north and the people rejoiced until they found to their horror that it was an immense mountain of water that was rolling down toward them.

The flood killed everyone but a few families who somehow or other had been warned of it and having built themselves a raft were rescued.

From their earliest traditions the people have been taught to believe in a life after they leave this world. They believe that the spirit, the moment it leaves the body, is compelled to travel a long distance to the west until it arrives at an immense chasm. At the bottom of this flows a very rapid rocky and dangerous stream.

This terrible gorge which is surrounded on every side by great mountains, the soul has to cross on a long and slippery pine log with the bark peeled off. The only passage to the happy hunting grounds.

On the bank of the stream, just at the other end of the log, are always six persons who have reached the ground and who throw sharp rocks at whoever attempts to cross the log the moment the middle of it is reached.

Those who have lived properly, according to the Indian idea of morals, have no trouble in crossing the log; the stones fall harmlessly from them and they reach the happy hunting grounds where there is perpetual day without difficulty. There the trees are



ever green , the sky cloudless, the breezes always gently blowing; there too a continuous feast and dance are going on; the people never grow old, but live forever and revel in perpetual youth.

The wicked when they attempt to cross the dangerous bridge can see the stones which are thrown at them and in trying to avoid them they fall from the giddy height into the awful gorge, thousands of feet below the slippery log where a rushing boiling stream is tumbling over the great sharp rocks, filled with dead fish and animals which are continually brought taround to the same place by the eddies and whirlpools.

There all the trees are dead, the waters infested by poisonous snakes, toads and repulsive looking reptiles; the dead are every hungry but having nothing to eat, are always sick but never die; there is no sun and the wicked are constantly climbing up by the thousands on the side of a high rock from which they can overlook the beautiful country of the good hunting grounds, the abode of the happy, but they can never reach it--Yakima Herald, September 8, 1890.

## Columbia

### Legends

All travelers on the river are familiar with the Pillar rock, 14 miles from Astoria on the Washington shore, says the Astoria Pioneer.

A pillar shaped rock, several hundred yards from the shore rising upwards of twenty-five feet above the water, gives the name to the place.

There is an old and interesting Indian legend connected with the rock that is not commonly known.

G.W. Nutter, an old resident of this county told the story of how according to the Indian theory, the rock originated. It is firmly believed by the old Indians.

Many years ago, long before John Jacob Astor's expedition sailed into the Columbia, old Chief Skamokawa, then a mighty chieftain and known as a magician with wonderful powers, inhabited the north shore of the Columbia.

He had a son, a stalwart young fellow whose prowess with the canoe and spear was the envy of the tribes on both sides of the big river. Not unlike the youth of the present day, he wandered away from the parental wigwam and feasted in the lodges of the surrounding tribes and allowed his gaze to dwell upon the dusky daughter of Nehalem, chieftain with so much ardor that no power could quench the fire of his love for the young damsel.

Old Skamakawa stormed at the youth and unbraided him with being unfilial to the name of his father, for desiring to unite with plebeians of the Nehalem order and lower their aristocracy and caste.

It was of no avail, however, and unmindful of the wrath of the old man, he hid himself to the side of his inamorata and was



united.

He thought to appease the old man's wrath by bringing his bride home and set out in his canoe to cross to his native land.

They proceeded to within a few hundred yards of shore when the mighty Skamokawa caught sight of them, and in his anger he called upon his magician's skill and seizing the cliff on which he stood he tore ~~it~~ from it a huge shaft and hurled it upon the canoe and its two occupants, empaling the young man and his bride beneath the mass, where to this day it is supposed they are.

Pillar rock is thus believed to have been created--Yakima Herald, October 9, 1890.

## Indians

## Legends

Everyone in eastern Washington knows of the Hell Gates on the Columbia. There are very few though who have heard of how a semi-civilized tribe of Indians tried to dam the Columbia river at the point for the purpose of securing a large nugget of gold that had dropped into the river from an overhanging ledge of quartz.

The river at Hell Gate is about 600 yards wide. The north bank is a butte, about 1,000 feet high, of quartz formation into which the river has cut so that a perpendicular wall rises from the water's edge. About 150 yards from this wall lies a huge rock or island. It is about 100 yards square and stands 50 feet out of the water. About the same distance from this rock farther towards the opposite bank of the river lies another island almost the same size. A short distance farther lies another island which extends almost to the river bank. A few rods below the rock wall on the North bank and the first island lies another rock about the size of the opening between the wall and the first island. The south bank is of a sandy soil.

A white man was wrecked on the Pacific coast several hundred years ago and being intelligent and the first white man ever seen by the Indians, was in a short time chosen ruler over one of the most powerful tribes in the northwest.

After assuming the title of chief he began exploring the interior country. He followed the Columbia river until he came to the place now known as Hell Gate. Here he discovered a vein of rich quartz.

The river at this time flowed in a canyon, the south bank being a wall of cement and solid sand. The north wall had been undermined by the river so that the top of it extended several



hundred feet out of the water

While working on this overhanging wall a pocket or large nugget of gold, the size of a full moon, was found. It was tested and examined before the work of removal began.

Several years were spent in rigging a contrivance to lift the wonderful nugget but at last all details were completed and the day arrived for the task to begin.

Everything worked like a charm and in a short while the nugget was on the surface and being rolled toward the village that had been established since the work began.

When about 100 feet of being on solid ground, it toppled a trifle to the left and rolled into the river. A dozen stalwart braves cast their bodies before the moving body but not in time for they were crushed to death.

Time passed slowly. The white chief had not been idle. He announced he had a plan to recover it. The plan was to cut the overhanging rock loose from the wall and allow it to drop into the river. This dam would hold the water back long enough to recover the nugget.

Work was begun and thousands of men worked long and hard. The fall of the year when the river was low was selected for the time and one day the awful crash came. The ground trembled as if an earthquake had come. The stream was dammed. There lay the sacred treasurer. Most of the tribe rushed into the bed of the stream to examine it.

Considerable time was lost. In falling the rock was broken in several places and the immense weight pressing against it from above forced one of the pieces out of place and the water pushed through with such awful force that nearly the entire tribe

perished.

The break was not large enough to carry the great sea that had formed by the dam and in a few days the cement and sand on the south side of the river gave way and when the great sea had entirely run out it was found it had carried with it other portions of the dam and the entire south wall of the river, leaving it in about the same shape as today.

The white chief was among the number lost and the Indians of this day still hold to the belief that he was the devil and only came among them for the purpose of destroying them. ✓

It is a fact known to the people living near Hell Gate that any number of Indians have been drowned at this point, but it is probably due to fear and mismanagement of their boats more than the causes assigned by the Indians--Yakima Herald, November 26, 1891



Indians

Legends

Tradition has it that when the Klickitats went west of the Cascades more frequently than they do now, two young graves fought a duel to the death on the brink of Snoqualmie falls, and that one was thrown into the seething pool below by his adversary.

The cause of the combat was their rivalry for the affections of an Indian Girl, May Bird, who bestowed her smiles so impartially that it was impossible to determine who was the most favored suitor.

When she learned the result of the duel however, she realized that the one who was the object of her affection had met his death. She became very dependant and when the tribe was about to depart she jumped from the rock into the precipice, almost 200 feet below.

Since that time the Klickitat Indians have had a horror of the spot and it was a noticeable fact that at the exhibitions given there last summer not one of the Klickitat hop pickers came near the falls.

Now the engineers and trainmen have seen her black eyes peering through the mist and wild love melodies mingle with the clatter of wheels as the train rushes by.

Only a portion of the apparition is visible and that only at favorable times. A halo of light shines around her head and dispels the darkness of the falls below. At first the supernatural vision was regarded as an optical elusion but it has been seen time and time again, the slender form floating about in the vapor and the sad, dark eyes always with that intense look as if searching eagerly for something which could not be found. Those who have looked upon the spectacle firmly believe that May Bird, the Indian girl, is still disconsolately grasping for the lost body of her Klickitat lover in that boiling foam and dark waters of Snoqualmie pool--Seattle Press Times, March, 1892.

Umtuch alone with his prize gazed at the skurrying fleecy clouds; listened to the roar of the mighty river. He slipped from his horse and half dragging, half carrying the girl, began a slow ascent of the crags.

Climbing from boulder to boulder, hoping against hope that the white men below would forget him and his victim in the lust of war; stealthily and silently he climbed up the rocks. Half way, two thirds, almost at the top--and Jack saw him.

Rapidly skirting the fighting men he rushed to the rescue of his sweetheart.

Unimpeded by burden, spurred on by love and hate and fury and revenge unheeding the shots discharged from the Indian's revolver--although one of them broke his wrist and brought a murmur of pain to his lips, up and up he toiled. At the very top of the rocks and Indian paused, drew a great breath of relief from utter exhaustion, smiled a fiendish, sneering hellish smile, almost in the face of the pursuing climber--then plunged a knife to the very hilt in the bosom of his fair victim and jumped from the rocks.

That was the scene the Breathless watchers below saw as they looked upward with straining eyes through the scudding clouds. That was the horrible catastrophe which, while it seemed yet impossible of occurrence, because of its devilishness, was capped by a climax still more thrilling, more desperate than itself. For Jack Munroe, pausing at the brink of the precipice over which had vanished all that he held dear on earth, gazed for a moment toward the forms of his friends and then with a cry that rang in their ears all the length of their lives, a great wailing heart-breaking sob of utter despair--the body of the gambler shot over the cliff and was lost to sight.

They buried the man and the maiden in one wide grave whose saddened pioneers, weeping tears of genuine sorrow when the simple



service was read. Cherokee swore that only the coyotes should have possession of the broken body of the Indian and he had his way.

The Indians on the reservation came, in time, to see the sadness and sorrow of the end of these two loving beings and one, long after and with the Indians own unknown craft-wrote it out in never fading characters upon the sombre sides of the Septris Patahanum near the spot where the tragedy occurred.

And it is said that the spirit of Umtuch guards the canyon where his bones were left unburied and that is why the belated farmer passing near the scene utters the prayer for the soul of Gambler Jack and fancies he is pursued by the wailing ghost of Umtuch as he hastens from the unhallowed spot--L.E. Sperry, Yakima Herald, January 10, 1895.



## Indians

Half way up the west side of Palmer mountain there are three rude headstones marking the tombs of three Klickitat Indian girls who died in captivity many years ago says Edward Wanicut a prospector and mine owner of Okanogan.

Many years ago, before the outbreak of the Nez Perce war, the Coeur d'Alene Indians who were at that time a warlike race often overran the domains of the Siwa's carrying off his horses, his cattle and not infrequently his wife or daughter.

The Klickitats were great travelers and they roam about from one place to another, always however respecting the property rights of others.

One night, so the story is told a party of Klickitats was attacked by a band of Coeur d'Alenes returning from one of their pilgrimages of invasion. The Coeur d'Alene braves were routed, but not until they had carried off three Klickitat maidens who were highly prized by the warriors of other tribes because of their beauty, endurance and skill in the preparation of food.

The pursuit was so hot that the captors found that it would be necessary to release the Klickitat women or adopt some strategem. Three young men of the tribes volunteered to bring the captives to the Coeur d'Alenes provided they were allowed to have them for squaws.

The old chief reluctantly gave his consent as he had fully intended that at least one of the beautiful captives should brighten his own teepee. It was better than to lose them altogether, however and the three braves took the women to a cave in Palmer mountain. From there they watched the rescuing party of the plains below and when the young Klickitat girls saw their people disappear on the trail of the Coeur d'Alenes all their hopes of liberty vanished. One of the captives was the daughter



of a medicine man and accustomed to handle and capture all kinds of reptiles, from which her esteemed and highly venerated ancestor was supposed to brew his most healing potions.

The maidens appeared perfectly reconciled to their fate and the Coeur d'Alene braves, with a touch of that vanity which is so frequently found in the civilized brothers, imagined that the great personal beauty of a Coeur d'Alene had captured and enthralled the hearts of the susceptible Klickitats.

That night there was a feast for they had not neglected to store the cave with food and bearskins. The Klickitat girls laughed merrily. In Chinook the universal Indian dialect, they carried on a sprightly conversation with the hated and disposed Coeur d'Alenes and sang blithe songs for their entertainment. At last the feast was over and the Indians following the tribal custom, married each other.

The last words of the simple and primitive ceremony had scarcely been said when almost simultaneously three terrified shrieks reverberated through the cavern. In the couch of each warrior had been concealed the deadly yellow rattlesnake and each Klickitat maiden had held each victim securely until the venomous reptiles had plunged their fatal fangs again and again into the flesh. Each couch was literally a den of snakes.

The Klickitat maidens were immediately put to death by the terrified Coeur d'Alenes but they expected no less as they had also been bitten by the snakes. Only one of the three Coeur d'Alenes lived and he was captured and burned at the stake near where Fort Spokane now stands, by the returning Klickitats. The tragedy was so unusual that the proverbial stoicism of the Indian did not restrain him from telling the facts before he was burned alive, and the Klickitats put up the rude headstones of which I spoke at the beginning of this narrative.

The tale traveled from one tribe to another and even to this

day it is a proverb among the Coeur d'Alenes that the 'embrace  
of the Klickitat maiden is death---Seattle Pre ss Times .