

ORIGIN OF
Our Historic Names

THE DALLES
WASCO
CELILO
MEMALOOSE



The Dalles, End of the Old Oregon Trail, 1843
"The Longest Road in Human History"

THIS LEAFLET ISSUED BY THE DALLES CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE FOR INFORMATION OF OUR VISITORS . .
. . AND MAY WE SAY ON ITS PRESENTATION

Klichiam Skookum Tillicum
(HOW DO YOU DO, MY GOOD FRIEND)

* **THE DALLES, WASCO COUNTY, OREGON.** The name The Dalles is derived from the French word dalle, meaning flag-stone, and was applied to the narrows of the Columbia River, above the present city of The Dalles, by French-Canadian employees of the fur companies. Among other things, dalle meant a stone used to flag gutters, and the peculiar basalt formation along the narrows doubtless suggested gutters. The word dalles signified, to the voyageurs, the river rapids flowing swiftly through a narrow channel over flat, basaltic rocks. The name is common in America. Well-known dalles are those of the Saint Louis, Saint Croix, Wisconsin, and Columbia rivers. The best known dalles are those of the Columbia. The name is not derived from the French dale meaning trough.

As far as the compiler knows the first use of the name Dalles in Oregon is in Franchere's Narrative on April 12, 1814, where it is used to describe the Long Narrows. John Work, in his journal of 1825, speaks of Dalls. The name La Grande Dalle de la Columbia became established.

The incorporated name of the community is now Dalles City, but the postal name, and the one in universal use is The Dalles, this style being adopted not only for historical and sentimental reasons but also to avoid

*The narrows of the river were submerged March 16, 1957 by backwater of The Dalles Dam.

duplication with Dallas, Polk County. The post office was established with the name Dalles on November 5, 1851, with William R. Gibson first postmaster. On September 3, 1853, the name was changed to Wascopum, and on March 22, 1860, it was changed to The Dalles.

The narrows of the river are generally known as The Dalles of the Columbia, and this collective term describes the geographic features from the Big Eddy on the west to Celilo Falls on the east. Just east of Big Eddy is Fivemile Rapids, formerly known as the Long Narrows, The Dalles or The Great Dalles. Further east is Tenmile Rapids, formerly known as the Short Narrows, Little Narrows or Les Petites Dalles. For detailed information about The Dalles of the Columbia see OHQ, March 1926, in the article by Henry J. Biddle entitled Wishram.

The neighborhood of Mill Creek at The Dalles was called Quenett by the Indians, which was a word for salmon trout. Lewis and Clark camped at the mouth of this stream on October 25, 26 and 27, 1805, and recorded the form Que-nett in their journals and maps. In April, 1806, they named this place "rockfort camp."

Dr. William C. McKay, in an article in The Dalles Mountaineer, May 28, 1869, gives the Indian names of a great many places in the vicinity of The Dalles. Dr. McKay says that long before the white men came, the Indians

called the locality of what is now the city of The Dalles Win-quatt, signifying a place encircled by rock cliffs.

WASCO COUNTY. When Wasco County was created, January 11, 1854, it comprised all the area of Oregon Territory between the Cascade Range and the Rocky Mountains, an empire in itself. By successive takings for other states and counties, the land area of Wasco County has been reduced to 2387 square miles.

Wasco is the modern name for a tribe of Indians. Early writers used the name in many forms. Ross in Fur Hunters of the Far West, volume I, page 186, speaks of the Wiss - co - pam tribe. Lee and Frost in Ten Years in Oregon, page 176 give Was - co - pam. For references to various spellings, see Handbook of American Indians, volume II, page 918. About the time of the immigrations white people shortened the name to Wasco.

The Wasco Indians were a Chinookan tribe, formerly living on the south side of the Columbia River, in the vicinity of The Dalles. The name Wasco is said to be derived from the Wasco word wacq-o, meaning a cup or small bowl made of horn. The Handbook of American Indians, volume II, page 917, says this referred to a cup-shaped rock near the main village of the tribe, but Dr. William C. McKay, in an article in The Dalles Mountaineer, May 28, 1869, says that the name Wasco meant makers of basins, and that the literal mean-

ing of the word was horn basin. Some of these basins were fantastically carved. Both of the explanations may be correct. Dr. McKay says that the locality of the city of The Dalles was called Win-quatt, signifying a place surrounded by bold cliffs.

* **CELILO, WASCO COUNTY.** This name is used for a railroad station, for the navigation canal along the south bank of the Columbia River, and for "the rather low but romantic horse-shoe shaped falls at the rock reef composing the upper end of this obstruction (Dalles) below which the Indian was accustomed to stand with his spear to pierce the jumping salmon. Like all other river falls these were known to the fur traders as The Chutes, and where the name Celilo was first used or whence it came is not known." T. C. Elliott OHQ, June, 1915.

Gustavus Hines, in Oregon: Its History, Conditions and Prospects, Buffalo, 1851, page 14, says: "A boy whose Indian name was Ken-o-teesh, belonging to the Si-le-lah tribe, was received into the mission in April, and died on the 19th of the following August. Whether Si-le-lah is the same as Celilo is a matter of conjecture, although a study of Oregon tribe names gives no other solution.

Early journals of fur traders and travelers do not mention Celilo. Celilo was used in 1859, according to Mr. El-

* Celilo Falls were submerged by the backwater of The Dalles Dam, March 16, 1957.

liott, who says there are several suggested meanings, including "tumbling waters," "shifting sands," and the name of an Indian chief, etc. Dr. Leo Frachtenberg of the Smithsonian Institution, in the Oregon Journal, December 31, 1917, says Celilo is a Yakima word meaning "cleft in the bank." Mr. Elliott's article referred to above gives more theories about the name and much information about the Celilo Canal.

Stories to the effect that Celilo is a name based on a remark of a steamboat captain, "I see, lie low", may be dismissed as fiction.

MEMALOOSE ISLAND, Wasco County. There are a number of geographic features in Oregon bearing the Chinook jargon word for death or dead. They are so named because they were Indian burial places. Several islands in the Columbia River are named Memaloose. The most important is near the south bank of the river between The Dalles and Mosier. On it is buried Vic Trevitt, a prominent pioneer citizen and for many years a resident of The Dalles. His monument is easily seen from the mainland. Memaloose is given by Gibbs as memaloost, who, says it is from the Chinook Indian word memalust, meaning to die. Memaloose is the spelling adopted by the USBGN and is in general use.

These Historical Extracts are from "Oregon Geographic Names by Lewis A. McArthur, Second Edition, Revised and Enlarged - 1944"