

Yakima Susie

One of the most familiar characters in North Yakima is Susie the subject of this sketch, whose likeness is shown below. Susie is a squaw, just a little wrinkled old Indian squaw, feeble, tottering like a last year's reed in the breeze, the light that once illuminated her eyes fading with the years that have brought to her heart joys and sorrows, pleasure and pain as they do to women and men of every race.

Susie is a landmark of the past which she helps to connect with the present in the minds of the early settlers of the valley. She was here before the white people came, she looked as old when they first saw her in many respects as she does now; she washed for them assisted in their housework; she was considered a reliable and trustworthy helper when many of the grown men and women of today were laughing, blue-eyed babies in their mothers' arms. Now she is passing into decline; her strength is gone; the cares of the present weigh but lightly upon her and the future she believes will take care of itself; her mind roams back to the scenes of her childhood and wanders in the woods and on the hills where she gathered berries and wild flowers, fished in the mountain streams and learned the true religion and the love of the God of nature from communion with nature in the visible forms that Bryant recalled in his immortal "Thanatopsis."

Susie's age is unknown, save to the author of her being. She has no idea how old she is and in fact never cared very much. Her memory of events that are a part of the history of the state shows that she must have lived nine decades and perhaps longer. Her memory is remarkably clear in regard to the early days of the Catholic churches or missions throughout the valley, for she is a convert to the Catholic religion, a fact of which she is very proud. It means everything and all to her and the



meanest thing that Susie can say to the little ruffians who tease her is "You are no Catholic; I know you; mika hale Catholic."

Through the kindness of George Cary who speaks the Chinook jargon fluently and who acted as interpreter a Herald reporter held a conversation with Susie a few days ago and learned something of her history--there being parts that she will not give but then what woman is there who cares to lay before the whole world all the pages of her life's book? --that will prove of more or less interest to the people of the valley who knew her twenty, thirty, perhaps forty years ago. She is by birth a Kittitas but her father was a Wenatchee Indian whose name she does not remember.

She has a vague idea however that he was interested in the war against the white race along in the 40's. Her mother was a Kittitas and Susie's early life was spent where she was born in the vicinity of the present site of Ellensburg.

Here her parents died, as nearly as she can describe the time about 1850. She has one brother still living, Kittiyas John. Her Indian name is Schwee-tat-ka, but what it means, not even she knows. But she is not half so proud of this or of the more convenient one given her by the white women as she is of her Catholic name which is Cecilia.

Susie had her love affairs and her marital troubles, the same as her pale faced sisters do. She married Indian Charlie but Charlie was ever of a fickle and changeable nature that didn't go with Susie. He was good to her as Siwash husbands go but he was too diligent in his pursuit of the light that lies in women's eyes to suit Susie, so they separated. She counted off on her fingers of her wrinkled hands until the astonished listeners knew that Charlie had seven wives. A few of these, according to Susie,



he still lives with near Ellensburg. She is the mother of one son and four daughters.

The son was run over by an engine and killed in the yards here about ten years ago. Susie was bitter in her criticism of the Northern Pacific officials, who should have paid her a sum sufficient to make up for the loss of the son to her, she thinks. She received many promises of settlement but never any money. All four of the daughters are dead.

Many of the families in the Yakima valley have employed her and she was considered one of the best servants to be found along the Indian women. She is too old and feeble to do much labor now but she is willing to work when she can. Her home is a little hut not far from the home of the sisters of charity, who can see that she is supplied with the necessities of life.

She sits in the sunny doorways along the street and is frequently thrown a coin by a passer by, some times a visitor or a tourist and some times by those who know her well and delight in hearing the funny "iwash" speeches of thanks she makes for Susie is grateful for every small favor---The Yakima Herald, Feb. 22, 1904.

Note: Agency has record of age..not mysterious or as old as indicated..Also her true name..Rest of story seems to coincide with agency record. Click "elander.

F.D. Clemmer presented a petition asking the city council to have "old Susie" and her tepee moved off his lot in block 86 on North Fourth street. The request was granted--Yakima Herald, May 20, 1902.



Epas Susanna Eddian, alias "old Susie" alias Yakima Susie, alias "Kittitas Susie, known to the agency at Fort Simcoe on the reservation as allottee 53" has become the subject of correspondence between the Yakima county and the Indian agency at the fort and indirectly of correspondence between the fort and the Indian agency at Washington.

Financially Susie is down and out and some one must take care of her. Just how to administer that care is a problem.

Mr. Paradise and his wife of the Oldtown road have been doing as much for the venerable Indian woman as can be done and will continue to help her until other arrangements can be made, but they have called the attention of the county to her case and the county has called the attention of Indian Agent Young to it and Mr. Young has called the attention of the Indian department to it. And Mr. and Mrs. Paradise are continuing their assistance.

Mrs. or is it Miss Epas Susanne Eddian owns an allotment of 80 acres on the reservation west from Toppenish. She is the possessor of lot 3 and the northwest quarter of the southwest quarter of the southwest quarter of section 19, 11, 17. Not only that but she is a citizen for she took her allotment under the Dawes act which conferred citizenship.

She is therefore in a measure wealthy even though in want for her allotment will sell for enough to support her the balance of her days.

As a citizen she is entitled to county aid in her distress but as a woman of property she is not.

In a shack south of the town on the Oldtown road Susie makes her home. It is a windowless shack for small boys and hoboes break any glass inserted to give light. For the most part there is no fuel to be found there for the hoboes take it for their own purposes.

The food supply at the shack is limited because of the fact that

hoboes , other Indians and the lawless appropriate what they find at her place. In fact Susie , no matter how cheerfully she may laugh when she is on the street seeking "chickamin" is a prey to any and all when she seeks the shack she calls home.

Wandering Indians on cold nights roll her out of her bunk that they may sleep comfortably. Husky hoboes take anything she has from money to fuel and scraps of food if it suits their fancy and small boys compel her to open the door for light or sit huddled up in the dark inside.

Mr. and Mrs. Paradise try to help her and there is a bright period every summer when old Indian friends call for her and take her on a summer trip to the cool weather of the hills. But that is all.

Indian Agent Young suggests that Susie's allotment be sold and the money used to support her. He says that if she had her home somewhere near to the agency he could issue rations to her but he cannot do so when she lives at such a distance and bills for outside assistance he says have to be disallowed.

W.B. Newcomb, of the office of the county auditor, has taken up the case and will see that something is done, one way or another, for the welfare of the well-known odd old character--Yakima Morning Herald, North Yakima, Thursday, December 30, 1909



What has become of the coin which Susie, the venerable Yakima Indian mendicant has cajoled from the purses of innumerable passersby?

Members of the board of county commissioners who now face the problem of taking care of the aged redskin as a charge would like some solution of the mystery.

Failing of an answer to the query they have addressed communications to officials in the United States Indian department urging that some aid be extended her.

At present Susie is rounding out her hundred and more years in St Elizabeth's hospital attended by Dr. Philip Frank who declares that she may not be able to care for herself longer. Injured in some unaccountable manner recently, Susie was found in a precarious condition. She had been run over by some vehicle and was severely hurt about the thighs.

She was unable to walk when discovered. Since then she has remained in the hospital.

During many years past Susie has made a living by the simple process of coaxing money from people on the streets. Her extreme age, said to be more than 100 years, made her an object of generous attention by the public while it relieved her from much restriction by the police.

Susie's favorite stand during recent months has been in the vicinity of the new Northern Pacific passenger station where she garnered a generous financial crop from travelers.

What she has done with the money remains a mystery. After it went into her eager maw it apparently disappeared for all time.

It is likely that Susie will become a public charge said Dr. Frank this morning. "The injuries which she received recently will probably affect her permanently. Investigations have been made by county authorities to learn what she has done with her money

which she has begged.

"Susie has an allotment of 80 acres of land, the government Indian department has been asked by the county commissioners to provide for her." Yakima Republic, September 9, 1910.

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Under Sale of Indian lands. Yakima Republic, Oct. 28, 1910.

Susie Williams, deceased, allottee No. 1732; the  
E 1-2 of the NE 1-4 of Section 10 township 10 N Range  
18 E W M ; containing 80 acres more or less. Bids to be  
opened December 5, 1910.

George Skahan, who occupied the old Michels place on the Yaki a reservation a mile and a half southwest from Parker died at Tacoma Thursday according to a report which reached this city Saturday.

His body was brought across the mountains Saturday and taken to Wapato for interment. Deceased, who was an Indian, is survived by his wife and three children.

It was at this place that Yakima Susie, the aged Indian woman who has made this city her summer home for years is spending the winter. Mr. Skahan, was asked by Superintendent Young of the Indian reservation to give such care as was needed to Susie for the winter and the task has been carried out, it is understood, as well as possible under the conditions, Susie being a more or less difficult charge--The Yakima Herald, Jan. 4, 1911.



"Yakima Susie" is dead. She died November 5 at the home of Agnes Emowtaueshet on the reservation between Wapato and Toppenish. The word of the death of the venerable Indian woman will be heard with genuine regret by a large number of the people of this town who knew her in other days.

Susie was known to all the white people who had lived here any length of time. Leonard Thorp, who came to the valley in February, 1861, says ~~Oh~~ he remembers having seen her very often after his arrival and that she then appeared to be an old woman. Hon. A.J. Splawn says she was a very aged woman.

Epas Susanna Eddian was the proper name of the Yakima Susie but as probably the only person who knew her right title was the superintendent of the Yakima reservation and she was known from Kennewick to Ellensburg and from Puyallup to Wenatchee as "Yakima Susie" or "Old Susie," her real name did not signify.

In the early days of the community when Susie wasn't more than 60 or 70 years of age she worked as an assistant in many of the homes then established in this valley and was much in demand where help was needed. Of late years she had been a great ~~Deed~~ beggar and her huddled-up figure and outstretched hand and her shrill cry for "chickamin" were familiar on the streets.

Yakima county from time to time took care of her but her shack on the southern outskirts of the town was robbed again and again despite the fact that the Paradis family, which lived near, made a sincere effort to protect her.

About a year ago Susie went to the reservation and an effort was made to have her allotment disposed of that there might be money to give her comfort in her old age. As a matter

of fact her allotment has been sold but the deed has not been approved and there has been no money available. Such estate as she leaves will be small and there are a number of heirs, one of them being the woman in whose house she died.

A quarter of a century ago the Northern Pacific railway was under construction through the valley Susie's husband and a grown son were killed by a train which struck their wagon. Later by a year or two a second son, the only surviving child, was killed by the railway near Ellensburg.

From that time forward for years she supported herself either by work or begging or in visiting around among her acquaintances. She was a Klickitat it is said, but had made her home on the reservation since the treaty of 1857. She made frequent trips to various parts of the state to visit other Indians but after an absence of two or three or six months her stand near the Sloan corner or in front of where T.G. Redfield had his office and shout her "chickamin, chickamin, sixty five cents," and many a person who refused to donate was roundly whacked over the head and shoulders and a blow from the old lady's cane carried considerable weight.

In some words of the white man's talk Susie was considerably eloquent. It was when she begun her oratory that a sensitive person wished to be somewhere else --The Yakima Herald, November 9, 1911. (with two col picture by Oakes)