

September 22, 1966

Mr. Ralph E. White, traffic manager
Washington State Ferries
Seattle Ferry Terminal
Seattle, Wash. 98104

Dear Mr. White:

Mr. Ted Robertson, publisher of The Yakima Dailies, asked me to reply to your letter inquiring as to the origin of the name Yakima.

You mentioned that persons inquiring for the information are seldom satisfied with a shallow explanation. The one you suggest does not appear to be correct.

I am sending, appended, material containing citations and other information, satisfactory I believe to substantiate the selection of the name. It will also provide your files with the most extensive background outside of my own files on the word, "Yakima." As a member of the American Name Society, a curator of the Washington State Historical Society and extensive researcher in regional linguistics and anthropological material, etc., I believe this material will help satisfy any doubt as to the historic background of the name Yakima.

I might mention that Mr. Robert Hitchman of Seattle (611 13th Ave. East, Seattle 2) is this state's most informed person on name origins for our region. He also is a curator of the State Society, has a large file representing years of research into place names, in which field he worked with the late Dr. Donald Clark of Seattle.

I am sure he would, as time permits, give you an assist on any name origin in which you might be especially interested. I have thousands of name origins recorded for east of the Cascades. The "standard handbook" in the name origin field, scarce, expensive and out of print:

Origin of Washington Geographic Names, by Edmond S. Meany U. of W.
Press, 1923.

I hope the attached provides the material you requested, and gives
you something worth preserving in your files.

Sincerely,

CLICK RELANDER
City Editor
The Yakima Daily Republic

It would be appreciated if you would tell us how we may obtain a
picture of "The Yakima" for potential publication. I presume that the
vessel is now under construction and as I recall, in California.

Addendum

YAKIMA--The name for an Indian Tribe of 5,400 persons (1966 enrollment) in Central Washington; name of a city, established by the Northern Pacific in 1885; of a county, created, Jan. 21, 1865; a river, originating on the eastern slope of the Cascade mountains and draining into the Columbia River, 180 miles distant; and a forest of 500,000 acres, the Yakima Indian Forest on the Yakima Indian Reservation.

DEFINITION-- Yak-a- (translation to become) ma, (the locative for people) literally, to become peopled.

TRANSLATION by full blood Yakima tribal members: Jim Looney, Johnny Tomanawash, Thomas K. Yallup, Alex Showaway, and others, (tape recorded). All of them, and on different occasions at periods over several years, say the name relates to a legend in which two daughters of a chief, living in the Yakima Valley proper, between Union Gap and Selah Gap, went away with a "Star Man" who came down from the sky. In later years they returned to earth bringing their children with them.

Yaka is a black bear in the Nez Perce language but has no relationship to Yakima, all old Indians I have talked with, said.

Pandossy, Rev. Charles, Oblate father who founded Ahtanum Mission in 1847. He wrote dictionary and grammar of the Yakima Language. (100 copies were published in 1860). This records: "Yak - pregnant. Ma - Root word for people."

Hodge, Dr. Frederick Webb, Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico, U. S. Government Printing Office, Part 2, 1910, p. 983 (Bulletin 30) (and from which Dr. Meany apparently took part of his reference in his names book) says "...Yakima (ya-ki-ma, 'runaway') an important Shahaptian Tribe formerly living on both sides of the Columbia and on the northernly branches of the Yakima and Wenatchee rivers in Washington..."

I personally knew Dr. Hodge, dean of anthropologists and ethnologists and former director of Smithsonian Institution. Before his death I asked him about this handbook reference source, 'runaway.' He told me it was a translation of Indians living just below present Union Gap, ranging north of the gap.

My oldest informants, regarded as historians by the Tribe, said these people, very long ago were called Mamachet, which meant "runaway" because they have left other bands and tribes to live by themselves.

Anthropologists agree that long ago there was no "Yakima tribe"

In 1855 the United States made a treaty with the Yakima (spelled Kakama in the treaty) and 13 other tribes and bands. Territorial Governor Isaac I. Stevens recorded that he confederated them at the treaty council as the Confederated Yakima Indian Nation.

In a like manner, and for personal expediency, Stevens, treating with the Walla Walla, Cayuse and Umatilla "confederated" them as Umatillas. In later years some 10 tribes in North Central Washington, all with various names, were confederated as Colvilles. Hence the Yakima, Umatilla and Colville Reservations. Now any enrolled Indian of the Reservations is called a Yakima, Umatilla or Colville, only, and his enrollment record so states.

McWhorter, L.V. - Tragedy of the Wakh-Shum, Prelude to the Yakima Indian War, 1855-56, privately printed, 750 copies 1937 -- "The definition of Yakima. Yakima, as contended by the tribe of that name, was conferred on them by the Spokanes or Kalispells, the last name being more widely known as Pend d'Oriettes. This appellation is foreign to their own language. The tribesmen--when induced to express

themselves--contend that any purported English rendition must necessarily be largely guesswork. But after thirty years of close contacts with the best informed of them on the subject, the following would seem the most logical analysis of the enigma.

"Yakima is a perversion of Yah-ah-ka-ma, prolonged accent on the second syllable. The various interpretations, such as Blackbear, Runaways, People-of-the-Gap and Succotash Gardens, can be regarded as wholly chimerical. The English rendition of the name in its original construction pertains to or denotes a "growing family..."

Logic will eliminate Succotash Gardens, one appellation of 50 years standing when it is recognized that corn and beans, used in the preparation of succotash, were not brought into the Yakima Valley until 1837 to 1847 at the earliest, or until after the name was applied to the Indians living here. So that origin report may be discarded by the most careful researcher.

Additional citations:

Cat-sa-nim- Gibbs in Pacific Railway Report. Rep. 1, p. 417, 1855, recognized now by scholars to have misquoted Lewis and Clark, Cut-sah-nem and Cut-sa-nim in the original journals of Lewis and Clark.

E-yack- im-ah--In Ross, Fur Hunters on the Columbia, Vol 1, p. 185, 1855.

Stobshaddat - Lord Nat. in Brit. Col. Vol II, p, 246, 1866, 'robbers; so called by Puget Sount Tribes'.

Yaakima- Chamberlain, in Rep. N.W. Tribes, Canada, 8, 1892.

(Kutenai name; said by folk etymology to mean 'foot bent toward the instep')

Yacaawas-In Schoolcraft, Ind. Tribes I, p. 521, 1853.

Yacamaws- Lane in Sen-Ex. Doc. 52, Ex. Doc. 52 31st Cong 1st sess, p. 174, 1850.

Yackaman-Cox, Columbia River II, 13, 1831.

Yacomans-Father P. DeSmet, New Ind. Sketches, p. 92, 1895.

Yookoomans- Parker Journal, p. 318, 1846.

Yakimas- Douglas in H.R. Msc. Doc. 98, 30th Cong. 1st Sess. p. 15, 1848.

The name was spelled Yakama in government records at the Yakima Indian Agency from 1861 until the '80s, then changed to Yakima without explanation.

Yakima City, now Union Gap, was incorporated in 1883.

The State Legislature, by act of Jan. 30, 1917, effective Jan. 1, 1918, dropped North Yakima (for present Yakima).

The same act changed the name of the original Yakima City to Union Gap, its present name.

Yakima was spelled Yakama on Territorial Gov. Isaac I. Stevens map of March 1857, drawn by William H. Carlton.

Citation, further explaining the name, "Runaway" which I construe a misintrepaton in instances where it has been used as an "origin word."

(McWhorter, source) "...The bands occupying the valley south of the Gap were designated as Mom-a-chets or Mam-a-chets; a term bordering on the epithetical. Louis Mann, deceased, perhaps the best tribal historian of his day, pronounced its rendition as not unlike the English "coward." Mr. Mann added:

3.

"When a boy I attended the agency school under Father Wilbur and we had our clan feuds. If a river-rock urchin (tribal designation, P'shwanapum) sneered at a Mom-a-chet lad because of his affiliations, he had a fight on his hands. I do not know the origin of Mom-a-chet...."

(McWhorter, a recognized historian of the Yakimas, was dead when I came to Yakima 18 years ago.)

Historical Background Notes - My research library, containing the Lewis & Dryden's Maritime History of the Pacific Northwest, published at Portland, Ore. in 1895 tells me that will not be the first time a vessel called The Yakima will be on Puget Sound. (p.218)

The sidewheel steamer Yakima, 117 long, beam 22, depth at hold 6 feet 5 inches was launched at Port Gamble in 1874.

In later years, "despite the advent of finer and more powerful tugs is holding her own, although at present used as a spare boat by the mill (1895). One of her captains was Davis Hill. Others were J.R. and William Williamson. And this was in the days of the colorful Puget Sound steamboatman, Capt. Mark Norton.

Another Yakima (Lewis and Dryden citation) was in her day the champion on the Upper Columbia. She was built at Celilo in 1864, making her first trip May 4, Capt. Charles Felton commanding...She was 150 feet long, 24 feet at beam and 5 hold, with 26

"elegantly furnished staterooms and a freight capacity of over 200 tons. She had a record of 41 hours and 35 minutes from Celilo to Lewiston a distance of 279 miles against a very swift current with many rapids to climb. This run was made by Capt. E.F. Coe in June, 1867 and (at that time) has never been excelled.

Coe commanded her most of the time till 1870 when he was succeeded by Capt. Thomas Stump who was the last master of the steamer. In 1875, on way down river with 160 ton of freight, she struck a rock in John Day's Rapids and was sunk just off the Oregon shore. She was raised but of little value afterwards. Peter W. DeHuff was one of her engineers and James W. Troup was purser in the early '70s.