

THE NAMING OF TENINO



By
Richard A. Edwards
Tenino City Historian

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House Arkeep Press, 2019

Cover Illustration: Huston Hotel and Northern Pacific Railroad Depot, Tenino, WA, 1883. Courtesy of the South Thurston Historical Society.

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City of Tenino

The Stone City



[http://www.ci.tenino.wa.us/
Train_Depot_Museum](http://www.ci.tenino.wa.us/Train_Depot_Museum)

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Preface

For decades, the origins of the name for the city of “Tenino” have been debated by local residents and Pacific Northwest historians. Thanks to the support of many people, past and present, I think we now have an answer to the question about how Tenino was named.

We owe a debt to past historians C. Lee Martin, Arthur Dwelley, and Scott McArthur, who began the process of gathering the folklore, researching the history, and publishing what they found.

As Scott McArthur, the author of *Tenino Washington: The Decades of Boom & Bust*, said: “you can’t have a book about Tenino without visiting the dispute over how Tenino got its name.”¹

Even as far back as the early 1900s the origin of the name was disputed.

There is some dispute as to how the town was named. Some say it is an Indian name meaning “meeting of the ways.” Others say that in the early days it was a railroad terminal and designated by the number 1090, called by railroad men “ten ninety.” It afterwards was called what it is now, “Tenino.”²

The mystery of how Tenino got its name has continued for more than a century. In 2013, the website Thurston Talk continued the dispute, asking “why was this locality named Tenino by the

¹ Scott McArthur, *Tenino Washington: The Decades of Boom & Bust*. Second edition. (Tenino, WA: South Thurston County Historical Society, 2012.), 141.

² Blendine Hays, “Tenino, Washington,” *The Coast* 17:3 (March 1909): 202.

Northern Pacific Railroad officials? This decision is surrounded by mystery.”³

I would like to thank Mayor Wayne Fournier, the City Council of Tenino, and the South Thurston Historical Society for supporting me as Tenino City Historian in my work to research and disseminate the marvelous history of our community.

Thank you to the archivists and researchers at the University of Oregon, the Washington State Historical Society, the Washington State Library, and Erin Schultz of the Minnesota Historical Society, for their support and help in providing some of the pieces that helped to solve this puzzle.

Special thanks to thank Kathy Bishop, Timothy S. O'Brien, Wes Divin, James Paxton, Kathy Allen, Drew Crooks, and Zach Tewalthomas, whose editorial comments helped make this book better.

³ Drew Crooks, “The Mystery of Tenino’s Name,” Thurston Talk, viewed March 23, 2018, <https://www.thurstontalk.com/2013/06/24/the-mystery-of-teninos-name/>

Introduction

In the spring of 1873, a historic event was about to happen in the valley of Scatter Creek in rural Thurston County, Washington.

For two decades the area, made up mostly of scattered farming families who settled on donation land claims, was noted for only two things: small coal mines that gave the region its name, “Coal Bank”, and Stephen Hodgden’s farm, also a stage station, which served as the local post office and transportation hub on the old 1830s Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) trail between Fort Nisqually and points south along the Cowlitz trail and up the Columbia River to Fort Vancouver, and the wagon trail carved by American pioneers of the Simmons party in 1845 that branched north to Tumwater and what would become the future territorial capital of Olympia. Both trails were likely just widened versions of earlier Native American foot trails.

In the autumn of 1872, the Northern Pacific Railroad (NPRR), building their track northward from their new base port in Kalama, reached the Scatter Creek valley just south of Hodgden’s farm. There they built a depot, and named it “Tenino.”

The Northern Pacific Railroad, having gained land granted by Congress for the building of their track and being in financial difficulties, was anxious to gain some revenue from both land sales and rail traffic. They acted quickly to sell some of the land close to their new depot by working in conjunction with the local land owner to jointly create a town that could be subdivided into saleable lots.

As a result, on June 4, 1873 Thomas H. Canfield, President of the Lake Superior and Puget Sound Company, the subsidiary land agency for the Northern Pacific Railroad, finally signed “The Plan of Tenino”, which was recorded in Thurston County on July 5,

1873. This plat subdivided the NPRR's portion of the land, gained through their charter for building the railroad.

Oddly, earlier on February 11, 1873, Stephen Hodgden and his wife, Deborah (Bosworth) Hodgden, signed "Hodgden's Addition to Tenino". While it was meant to be recorded in Thurston County as an *addition* after the Northern Pacific Railroad's land company filed their plat to create the town, it ended up being filed first, on May 22, 1873.

Regardless of who filed first, the end result was the creation of a town named Tenino. The agreed upon street names were: Central, Howard (after William A. Howard, land commissioner for the NPRR from 1872-1878), Olympia (after the territorial capital), Hodgden (after the local land owner), and Stage (the road used by the stages).

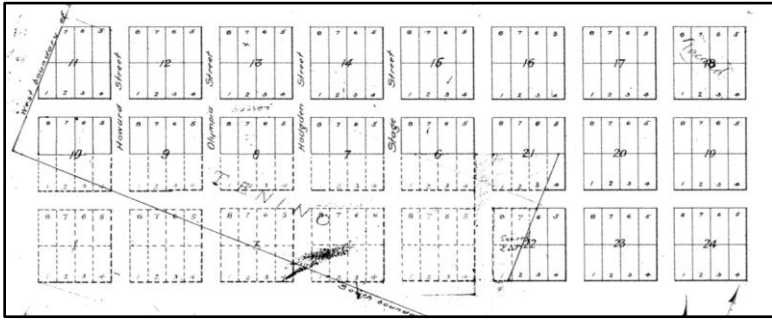


Plan of Tenino, 1873 (NPRR)⁴

The newly created town was named "Tenino" after the recently constructed Northern Pacific Railroad depot located less than a mile south of Hodgden's farm, near the foot of Olympia Street on the maps. Since November of 1872, the Tenino depot had been the

⁴ Thurston County Auditor, Plats and Surveys, 1855-Present, File 2700032 7/5/1873, Book 2, page 29.

northern end of the track for what would become the Kalama to Puget Sound line of the Pacific Division of the Northern Pacific Railroad and it would remain so until the end of 1873 when the line would reach its final terminus on Puget Sound at New Tacoma.



Hodgden's Addition to Tenino, 1873 (Hodgden)⁵

To discover why the Northern Pacific Railroad chose “Tenino” as the name for its depot, we must return to 1872 and the building of this important segment of what would become a transcontinental railroad linking Puget Sound and many Washington communities with the East.

There we will find the answer.

⁵ Thurston County Auditor, Plats and Surveys, 1855-Present, File 2700031 5/22/1873, Book 2, page 27.

The Northern Pacific Railroad



Tenino Depot in 1883 celebrating the transcontinental completion
(Photo courtesy of the South Thurston County Historical Society)

In 1864 the United States Congress chartered the Northern Pacific Railroad Company (NPRR) for the purpose of constructing “a railroad and telegraph line from Lake Superior to Puget Sound”. For building track, the charter granted the railroad “twenty sections [a section of land being one square mile containing 640 acres] per mile on each side in Territories and ten sections in States.”⁶

After spending several years arranging financing, officers, and surveys, the Board of Directors decided on their first construction steps. Laying track was an expensive proposition, and financing eventually depended upon Jay Cooke & Company of New York

⁶ Eugene. V. Smalley, *Book of Reference for the use of the Directors and Officers of the Company*. (New York, Sackett & Rankin, 1883), 23.

who issued \$100,000,000 in bonds divided into \$50 lots to encourage small investors.⁷

By 1870, the company was intent on starting construction. They decided that in “Washington Territory, the line from the Columbia River to Puget Sound should be first constructed to accommodate the business of that section and facilitate access to and the speedy sale and settlement of the company’s lands on each side of the sound.”⁸

The railroad’s main concern was creating a line that would be capable of generating income, both from land sales in growing areas of settlement and from traffic generated by communities in more populated areas. The sooner the track was profitable, the happier the investors would be and the more financially sound it would make the company.

In early January 1871, the *Morning Oregonian* reported that the NPRR had purchased five hundred acres of land “about two miles from Coffin rock” upon which they had laid out a town to be called Kalama, so named “After the Indian name of a small stream which puts into the Columbia near by.”⁹

This new town would be a port on the Columbia River with access down river to the Pacific Ocean and up river to Portland, then the largest city in the Pacific Northwest. Kalama would include the workshops, offices, and a depot for the first NPRR Pacific Division rail line that was to proceed from here to Puget Sound.

When the NPRR began laying track northward from Kalama, they had not yet chosen the terminus of the line on Puget Sound,

⁷ Sol H. Lewis, “A History of the Railroads in Washington,” *The Washington Historical Quarterly* 3:3 (July 1912): 189.

⁸ Eugene V. Smalley, *History of the Northern Pacific Railroad*, (New York: Putnam, 1883), 152-153.

⁹ “The New City of Kalama,” *Morning Oregonian*, (Portland, OR), January 2, 1871, 3.

though the main candidates seemed to have been Olympia, Steilacoom, or Seattle.¹⁰

The Northern Pacific Railroad surveyed the route north from Kalama as far as the trail junction at Hodgden's Station. At that point they would have to decide if they were going to proceed to Olympia, the territorial capital, or if they were going farther northeast on Puget Sound, in which case from Hodgden's they would head east to follow the old Hudson's Bay Company trail across Yelm Prairie and then north to Tacoma or Seattle or even further.

J. B. Montgomery was hired to build the first section of track north from Kalama.

J. L. Hallett was contracted to build the next 30 miles, ending more than a mile south of Hodgden's Station. A total of 65 miles of track to be built before the decision about the final Puget Sound terminus had to be made.

AXEMEN.
**200 CHOPPERS AND LOGGERS
WANTED!**
TO do clearing work on the Northern Pacific Railroad, between the Cowlitz river and Hodgden's. Also
Well-Broken Ox Teams.
Men to apply to T. C. SHERMAN, at Pumphreys Landing, on and after Monday, Sept. 11th.
Applications for work of Ox Teams to FRANK HINCKLEY, Resident Engineer, Kidder's Camp, on Cowlitz.
Steady work and good wages.
THOS. B. MORRIS,
Eng'r Pac. Div.
Kalama, Sept. 9, 1871. 45:15

Washington Standard
September 9, 1871

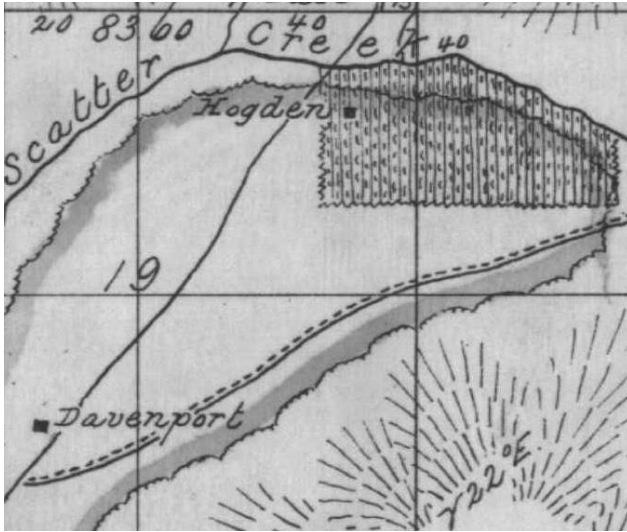
In April 1872, Hallett began grading work from near Hodgden's moving southward.

By May, with a force of 500 men, about half "white" and half "Chinamen", he had graded and piled and filled the road from south of Hodgden's for about eight miles.¹¹

¹⁰ Smalley, *History of the Northern Pacific Railroad*, 193.

¹¹ "The Territories," *Morning Oregonian*, May 17, 1872, 1.

Hodgden's Station



Homestead survey map, Township 16,
North Range 1, West 1, Willamette Meridian. 1856.¹²

Hodgden's Station was the name given to the stage stop at the farm of Stephen Hodgden in the valley of Scatter Creek. It was one of nine stations on the stage road between Monticello and Olympia.¹³

By 1855¹⁴ the area from Scatter Creek to the Skookumchuck River had become known, due to its local coal mine, as "Coal Bank"¹⁵. Under the name "Coal Bank", a post office was established on April 17, 1860, with Stephen Hodgden as the first Postmaster.¹⁶

¹² U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, General Land Office Records. Doc # 367 (3/11/1867), Accession WAOAA 084928.

¹³ Guy Reed Ramsey, *Postmarked Washington: Thurston County*, (Thurston County, WA: Thurston County Historic Commission, 1988), 44.

¹⁴ Georgiana Blankenship, *Early History of Thurston County, Washington*, (Olympia, WA, 1914), 24-25.

¹⁵ Arthur Dwelley, "Short History of Tenino, Washington," accessed March 16, 2019, <http://www.oocities.org/elechtle/texts/teninohistory.html>

¹⁶ Ramsey, *Postmarked Washington: Thurston County*, 44.

In addition to Samuel Davenport to the southwest of Hodgden's farm, others in the valley of Scatter Creek included the families of Henness, Davenport, Gibson, Colvin, Martin, Crowder, and Tilley. Further south along the Skookumchuck River were the homes of the Yantis, Northcraft, Miller, Prince, Thompson, Mabrie, Ticknor, and Hawks families.¹⁷

In 1870 the United States Census for Washington Territory listed about 150 pioneers living scattered about the region of Coal Bank.

Just southwest of Hodgden's farm, near Davenport's, was a trail junction. Since the 1830s the Hudson's Bay Company had used the trail, running from their Fort Nisqually on Puget Sound southward to their farms near the Cowlitz River and connecting via the Columbia River to Fort Vancouver.

The trail blazed in 1845 by the Simmons party (early American settlers who founded what would become Tumwater about a dozen miles to the north) connected to the old HBC trail, now part of the Oregon Trail, near Hodgden's farm.

This trail junction made Hodgden's farm a natural coach stop, which by the 1860s had become known as Hodgden's Station.

By June 1872, the entire section was almost ready for ties and Hallett was reported to have 800 men employed.¹⁸ The need to bridge the Cowlitz River held up construction in July, but it was

¹⁷ David Nicandri and Barney Smith, *Pioneer Map of Thurston County*, (Olympia, WA: State Capitol Historical Association, 1974)

¹⁸ "Pacific Coast News", *The Albany Register*, (Albany, OR), June 28, 1872, 3.

expected that Hallett's section would be ready for iron rails soon and hoped to be completed by mid-September.¹⁹

By August, ties were being distributed on the southern end of the road, though one big cut near McDonald's still remained to be graded and completion was likely to slip into October.²⁰

In September, Robert Mason began laying iron rails, though the Cowlitz River bridge issue was still holding things up, prompting completion estimates to slip further to mid-October.²¹ Meanwhile Hillory Butler had been contracted to continue the telegraph line northward from Olequa to Hodgden's.²²

By early October, progress was still waiting on a trestle at McElroy's crossing, though the expectation was to complete the line to Hodgden's station by the 10th.²³

In a delightful story written by Tom B. Merry²⁴, paymaster for Hallett, the state of the line and region in the early fall of 1872 was related via an article published in the *San Francisco Examiner* on October 11, 1872.

A Ramble Through Washington Territory.

Four months of daily and diligent toil on the line of the Northern Pacific Railroad had worn me down considerably, and, in fact, the position of general time-keeper is no sinecure where a thousand men and a proportionate number of teams are employed. At last the final blow was struck, the last shovel-full of earth was cast

¹⁹ "Columbia River Items", *Washington Standard*, (Olympia, WA), July 20, 1872, 2.

²⁰ "Railroad", *Washington Standard*, August 24, 1872, 2.

²¹ "Railway News, Western Division," *Bozeman Avant Courier*, (Bozeman, MT), September 5, 1872, 1.

²² *Washington Standard*, September 21, 1872, 2.

²³ *Washington Standard*, October 6, 1872, 2.

²⁴ "Gone" *Washington Standard*, November 30, 1872, 2.

and the thirty miles of Hallett's contract was done in a way that left no room for doubt as to the Field Marshal's ability to build grade as substantially and more rapidly than any man on the coast. Mike Connolly's outfit of "Faugh-a-Ballaghs" had built ten miles in sixty-five working days, through the worst graveyard of fir stumps I had ever seen. And now came a breathing-spell from the life of bustle that had seen me in the saddle at 5 o'clock in the morning and at my desk often after 11 at night.

My amiable *confere*, Paymaster Curran, wished to know if I would accompany him to Portland, but I declined, for I was determined to see Puget Sound and now I am glad I came, for I have seen much to amuse and instruct me. To work a whole season within forty miles of the "Mediterranean of the Pacific," and then return to another part of the coast without seeing it would be like taking a sea voyage to Antwerp and then going back to New York without visiting the battle-field of Waterloo. So one Saturday night I found myself on my faithful horse, riding up the grade leading to Olympia. It was nearly four o'clock when I left camp, to ride for the last time, perhaps, over the paths which none knew better than I.

How quiet everything seemed! Where were the long files of groaning carts, drawn by weary horses and driven by profane Patlanders, that I always used to see at this hour anxiously awaiting the order to "knock off?" Where were the vast army of toiling Pagans, that had worked bareheaded in the high cuts and blistered their brains on the dumps where they kept their shovels constantly moving. Gone! All gone! The sharp clang of five hundred restless picks, the rumbling of heavy carts, the monotonous "drive up" of the foreman and the ring of the blacksmith's anvil; all were hushed and silent. I rode eleven

miles without meeting a soul save one solitary teamster, who was distributing ties preparatory to laying the track. The silence was almost painful, for night was coming on and I had yet twenty miles to go. So I at last came to a place where the telegraph road from Olequa (head of steam navigation on Cowlitz river) crossed the grade, and took the line across the prairie.

The scene was exquisite. The sun was just sinking behind the precipitous hills of Wahkiahkum, and the last rays seemed to tinge the clouds above me with a motley mantle of purple and fretted gold. The sea-breeze, too, came a little chilly and warned me to button up my overcoat as I cantered lightly past comfortable looking farms ornamented with neat cottages. The broad fields presented a golden vista of grain stacked and ready for the thresher. The season here is short and the year was already in its sheaf. Along the borders of the prairie the maples were a flow of mingled scarlet and gold, for “Autumn’s fiery finger” had already tinged their tender leaves, and further back on the rocky hills the tall sentry pines raised their graceful minarets toward the rapidly darkening sky, while above them all, to the east of me, looked through the Autumn haze, the hoary crest of Old Tacoma [Mt. Rainier], crowned with the tempests of centuries. The squirrel barked merrily as he dropped his Winter’s stores from the boughs of a tall pine, while father partridge beat a reveille on a fallen log, to summon home his spouse and her youthful brood. Long streaming phalanxes of wild fowl were flying southward and their sharp cries told me that their mighty but weary pinions had brought them many a league since dawn. Twilight came on apace and then darkness.

Hungry as a catamount. The moon was rising as I reached Hodgdon's station, fourteen miles from Olympia. In reply to my conundrum as to whether supper was obtainable, a groom who took my horse told me that the stage from Pumphrey's (Olequa) was already overdue, and whenever it came there would be relief for my unruly appetite. So he took Bumblebee to the barn, while I made the best of my way to the family sitting-room, where I had not long to wait until the stage rattled up to the door. By the way, I never wash while traveling until I get to the road's end, and then it all comes off at once. The passengers were three in number, a lady and her little son, and one of those heirs-at-law of the Wandering Jew, whom Front street in your city sends out annually to extol the merits of Buggins' Barbaigo Bitters and Muggleton's Mellow Monogahela- in short, a whisky drummer. Those men overrun Washington Territory every season, and travel night and day. How they rest I have never found out, unless they take a six months' nap in San Francisco when business is dull. One of them can discount Poe's "long albatross, incumbent on air," when it comes to incessant travel.

A Sullen Youngster. So we sat down to a regular Oregon style supper of ham and eggs, the drummer having insisted on my taking the head of the table. The lady and her boy were seated on my right. The youngster had a sour glance out of the eye and a low forehead. In reply to my query if she would have some ham, the lady bowed graciously. I next helped the drummer, and turning to the boy asked: "Little man, will you have some ham?" "No," said he sullenly. "No what?" inquired the mother with a deprecating air. "No ham!" retorted the little torment.

A few minutes afterwards the stage drove off and I mounted my horse for a gallop to tide water. It was bright

as day, for the moon was nearly full, but I had scarcely gone six miles before I found the woods on fire, and the sound of falling timber on either side of me did not produce the most pleasant reflections. At length, about half-past ten o'clock, I found myself riding through the beautiful village of Tum Water, two miles from Olympia. This place is destined to become a prominent manufacturing point, as the Des Chutes river affords water-power enough to run ten times as many mills as are now located there. It was a little after eleven when I rode down the graceful slope and entered the town of Olympia, the capital of the Territory. It lies at the head of the Sound, and a long drawbridge crossed the Des Chutes, through which small vessels are enabled to go up to Tum Water.²⁵

Merry was not the only person traveling along the line under construction that Fall.

²⁵ "A Ramble Through Washington Territory", *The San Francisco Examiner*, October 11, 1872, 1.

The Pacific Coast Committee

On October 1, 1872, George Cass assumed the position of President of the Northern Pacific Railroad. Knowing the importance of the Columbia River to Puget Sound line, his first order of business had been to form a Pacific Coast Committee of NPRR officials to tour the Kalama line under construction, search for the right terminal port on Puget Sound, and journey up the Columbia River on the Oregon Steam Navigation Company's steamboats.



George W. Cass, 1875
Minnesota Historical Society

NPRR President George Washington Cass had traveled from the East with R. D. Rice, Vice President of the NPRR, Thomas H. Canfield, President of the Lake Superior and Puget Sound Company (created to sell land that the NPRR acquired), Fredrick Billings (Managing Director of the NPRR Land Department), B. P. Cheney of Boston, Charles B. Wright of Philadelphia, James Stinson of Chicago, W. Milnor Roberts (Chief Engineer for NPRR), General A. B. Nettleton of Philadelphia, William Howard (ex-Senator from Michigan), William B. Ogden of Chicago, Senator William Windom of Minnesota, William S. King of Minnesota, and Samuel Wilkinson (NPRR Secretary) on the Central Pacific Railroad to San Francisco and then by steamer to Kalama.^{26, 27, 28}

In addition to building the Kalama to Puget Sound line, the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1871 had decided the quickest way to open up travel eastward across Oregon and Washington and all the

²⁶ Henry Hall, *America's Successful Men of Affairs*, (New York: The New York Tribune, 1896), v. 2, 896.

²⁷ "Railroad Magnates", *Washington Standard*, September 28, 1872, 2.

²⁸ "Northern Pacific Railroad", *Corvallis Gazette-Times*, (Corvallis, OR), October 18, 1872, 1.

way to Idaho would be to extend their transportation line by acquiring the steamboat and rail lines of the Oregon Steam Navigation Company (OSN). With this in mind, the NPRR purchased controlling stock, giving them 75% interest in the OSN in early 1872. This ownership gave the NPRR “possession of nearly all the transportation facilities then existing in Oregon and Washington Territory.”²⁹



John C. Ainsworth
*Lewis & Dryden Marine
History of the Pacific
Northwest.*

The committee began by holding meetings at the NPRR offices at Kalama on October 1st and then took a ride along the railroad under construction northward. Accompanying them were Jonathan Goodwin and General Sprague, general agents for the NPRR in the Pacific Northwest, and John C. Ainsworth, President of the Oregon Steam Navigation Company. Ainsworth would become an integral part of NPRR management in the months and years to come, becoming a member of the Board of Directors and Managing Director for the NPRR Pacific Division.

“The road being in splendid condition from Kalama to Pumphrey’s, (nearly 30 miles) on the 1st inst., when the Board of Directors took the cars northward, the locomotive engineer (Mr Riley) gave them a lively ride, at the rate of *forty miles an hour* to Olequa! –(Pumphrey’s.)³⁰

²⁹ Smalley, *History of the Northern Pacific Railroad*, 187-188.

³⁰ *Kalama Beacon*, (Kalama, WA), October 19, 1872, 1.

Moving on from Pumphreys in carriages, passing through Hodgden's Station, they arrived in Olympia where they boarded the *North Pacific* steamboat for a tour of Puget Sound.³¹

The Oregon Steam Navigation Company

The Oregon Steam Navigation Company (OSN) had been created in the 1860s under the presidency of John C. Ainsworth. They built a network of transportation from Portland, Oregon, up the Columbia and Snake Rivers to the Idaho mining areas. By 1872, the OSN was a profitable company, providing transportation via a fleet of steamboats and several portage roads and small railroads circumventing the river's navigational barriers.

Once the Pacific Division line was finished, the NPRR would have a transportation network able to offer shipping from Puget Sound to Kalama (where ship service would allow ocean shipping to the Pacific or boat service to Portland) and connect via their subsidiary's steamboats up the Columbia and Snake Rivers all the way to Lewiston, Idaho.

"Those bound for Eastern Washington (and if expeditious travel be an object, to any part of the Territory) will be best accommodated by the steamers of the Oregon Steamship Company, which make weekly trips from San Francisco to Portland. Arrived at Portland, steamers leave daily for the upper Columbia, by which all parts of Eastern Washington are reached. There is also daily communication, Sunday excepted, by steamers to Kalama, and thence by the Northern Pacific Railroad to Puget Sound."³²

³¹ "Tour of the Directors of the Northern Pacific Railroad," *Morning Oregonian*, October 12, 1872, 3.

³² Lewis, "A History of the Railroads in Washington," 186.

A Ramble Through Washington Territory

(Continued)

On Wednesday evening last I took the Steamer "North Pacific." Capt. Starr, for a run over to Victoria, and at 10 P.M. the double-stroke of the engineer's gong warned us that she was backing out into the stream. She is a tidy, little, low-pressure boat, about the size of the Surprise that used to run to San Diego, and was afterwards burned up in China. Her passenger accommodations are admirable, the table well provided, and the officers all masters of their relative stations. But the boat herself reflects honor upon San Francisco mechanics. She reels off her fourteen miles per hour all along the Sound and Admiralty Inlet, and sobers down to twelve when she strikes the stormy Straits of Fuca. I did not go to bed until after the moon went down, but sat in the pilot-house with sturdy Dan Morrison and silently watched the beauty of the scenery as we touched at Steilacoom, Tacoma, Seattle, Port Gamble, Port Madison, Port Ludlow and Port Townsend. We saw no end of small stern-wheelers dodging about, and propellers towing sailing vessels and rafts of logs. If there is a handsomer sheet of water than Puget Sound, I have never seen it.

Seattle is the leading business town on the Sound, and numbers about three thousand souls among its denizens. The commercial edifices are ahead of Olympia, and yet not quite equal to those of Portland. The lumber interest is the chief one, although the coal mines on Lake Washington are making considerable trade in the black diamonds. The greatest lumbering point, however, is Port Gamble, formerly known as Teckalot, a name I should like to have seen retained. I never was an admirer of the man-

worshipping style that names towns and vessels after individuals. I used to like the Oregon boats for their sonorous Indian names – the Idaho, Hassalo, Oneonto, Yakima and Okanagon – the latter of which is only fit to be pronounced by the lips of Cicero himself.³³

From October 2-4 the committee toured Puget Sound from Olympia to Victoria, BC, Canada and back. They viewed the waterways and ports, including Olympia, Port Gamble, Port Townsend, Bellingham, Mukilteo, and Seattle, with hopes of finding a final terminal for their Puget Sound line.

Their goal was “to start building at the nearest [to Kalama] point on the Sound where they could find a good harbor, good shore facilities for wharves, and plenty of cheap land to acquire for the future city.”³⁴

By October 5th, the group had returned to Kalama and continued their meetings. On this date, having viewed the current work, the committee directed the Chief Engineer to “construct so much of the sixty sixth mile North of Kalama as will carry the road to a suitable site for the creation of a turn-table, and the necessary temporary buildings to accommodate the business for the next twelve months.”³⁵

This additional mile was needed to carry the line forward to where the to-be-built “temporary” depot would be closer to the trail junction and Hodgden’s Station, and it bypassed the surveyed line that would have headed to Olympia.

³³ “A Ramble Through Washington Territory”, *The San Francisco Examiner*, October 11, 1872, 1.

³⁴ Smalley, *History of the Northern Pacific Railroad*, 193.

³⁵ “Northern Pacific Railroad, Executive Committee Meeting Minutes,” October 5, 1872. Minnesota Historical Society, Northern Pacific Secretary’s Records, 136.D5.2F.

On October 7th, the group held their meeting on board the OSN steamboat, *Emma Hayward*, and headed up the Columbia River from Kalama. They journeyed along most of the OSN line, arriving at Wallula on October 9th on board the OSN steamboat, *Onyhee*.³⁷

Due to the low water at Wamley Rapids, the committee did not go further, up the Snake River.³⁸

In October of the year before *The New Northwest* newspaper in Portland reported on a recent traveler who stated: “we reached Celilo, where we boarded the steamer *Tenino*, and were once more steaming up the Columbia, through a barren-looking region of seemingly interminable undulation, abruptness, boulders and oddity, where, in spite of the forbidding aspect of the country, the fat cattle of a thousand hills come down to drink, bringing their sleek sides and playful gambols evidence unmistakable that the fat of the land is spread for them in these grand solitudes.”³⁹

³⁷ “Northern Pacific Railroad, Executive Committee Meeting Minutes,” October 7, 1872. Minnesota Historical Society, Northern Pacific Secretary’s Records, 136.D5.2F.

³⁸ “Tour of the Directors of the Northern Pacific Railroad,” *Morning Oregonian*, October 12, 1872, 3.

³⁹ *New North-West*, (Deer Lodge, MT), October 6, 1871, 1.

The Oregon Steam Navigation Company's *TENINO.*



OSN Steamboat *Tenino*
Oregon Historical Society, OrHi 9029

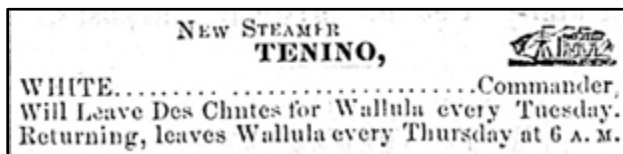
In 1861 the Oregon Steam Navigation Company built a new steamboat on the upper Columbia River. They named it “*Tenino*” after the Native American band of that name that had lived, and still fished during the summer, near that place.

Judge Fred W. Wilson, of The Dalles, Oregon...an authority on all matters of early Steamboat history:

“I feel well satisfied that the name is derived from an Indian tribe, who, in a very early day, fished around the Falls at Celilo. What substantiates this belief is that the location about a mile west of Celilo Falls has always been called Tenino, and was so called before the boat was built or named, so I feel safe in the deduction that the boat was named for the tribe known as the Tenino Indians.”⁴⁰

⁴⁰ “Origin of ‘Tenino is unsolved,” *Thurston County Independent*, (Tenino, WA), January 3, 1936, 1.

Since 1862 the OSN steamboat, *Tenino*, had been plying the waters of the upper Columbia River, regularly docking at Wallula.⁴¹



Ad in the *Walla Walla Statesman*, April 5, 1862.

In 1873 the OSN had three boats operating above Celilo: the *Yakima*, *Onybee*, and *Tenino*.⁴² The *Tenino* held the record for having gone the farthest up the Snake River, all the way to Pittsburg Landing, Idaho.⁴³

While there is no report that states the committee traveled onboard the *Tenino*, it seems very likely that they must have either seen the boat or heard of it during their river journey or been told of it while meeting at the offices of the OSN.

Though purely conjecture, it is also possible that the location of the tribe's summer village, (usually occupied April to October prior to their removal in 1858 to the reservation) which was also called Tenino, might have been noticed by the traveling committee. Perhaps the committee members even noticed natives fishing in the Columbia and might have been informed that they were the "Tenino Indians."⁴⁴

By October 11th, the group had returned downriver to Portland where they met at the offices of the Oregon Steam Navigation Company. A presentation was made by Ainsworth, Thompson, and

⁴¹ *Morning Oregonian*, April 21, 1863, 3.

⁴² *New North-West*, March 1, 1873, 1.

⁴³ Gordon R. Newell, ed., *The H. W. McCurdy Marine History of the Pacific Northwest* (Seattle: Superior Publishing Company, 1966), 206.

⁴⁴ George Peter Murdock, "The Tenino Indians", *Ethnology* (April 1980), 19:2, 129-130.

Reed of the OSN regarding the common interests of the two companies on the Pacific Coast. In the Pacific Coast Committee meeting, the Oregon Steam Navigation Company was requested to research terms for favorable connection from the NPRR's yet-to-be-determined permanent terminal on Puget Sound with steamboats, including possible purchase of an entire existing steamboat line, which would allow them to control a larger transportation route.⁴⁵ Their research resulted in the Board ordering the purchase of the Starr Brothers steamboats (including the *North Pacific*) on Puget Sound in late November.⁴⁶ Given the NPRR's financial situation at this time, it appears that no such sale was ever finalized.

At the Executive Committee meeting that night at the Clarendon Hotel in Portland, the Chief Engineer was ordered to turn over to General Sprague: "the sixty five miles of road between Kalama and Hodgden's and all the property and materials connected with the working thereof...[and] the management of the business of the completed road and the completion of the ballasting be placed in the hands of General Sprague the Assistant Treasurer and General Agent on the 1st of November proximo..."

Sprague was further instructed "...to keep no larger quantity of supplies on hand, including wood, than is necessary for the current economical running of the Road – nor to employ any greater number of men than is necessary to do the business of the Road economically from month to month...no construction of buildings of any kind shall be made without the written authorization of the President or this Committee – and the Committee now authorize the construction at the present Northern terminus of the Road of a cheap temporary building for the shelter of passengers and such

⁴⁵ "Northern Pacific Railroad, Board of Directors Meeting Minutes," October 11, 1872. Minnesota Historical Society, Northern Pacific Secretary's Records, 136.D5.6F.

⁴⁶ Smalley, *Book of Reference*, 100.

small quantity of freight as may be offered for transportation, and of a small shed for the shelter of one locomotive.”⁴⁷

Up to this point, all newspaper articles about the track building and all Northern Pacific Railroad documents refer to the area that would become Tenino only as “Hodgden’s” or “Hodgden’s Station”.

This temporary northern terminus of the line, which was still being built, would be named in Portland, Oregon the next day, October 12, 1872.

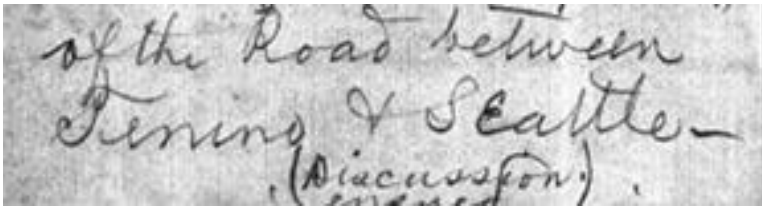
⁴⁷ “Northern Pacific Railroad, Executive Committee Meeting Minutes,” October 11, 1872. Minnesota Historical Society, Northern Pacific Secretary’s Records, 136.D5.2F.

The Naming of Tenino

On October 12th, 1872, the Pacific Coast Committee of the Northern Pacific Railroad met at the offices of the Oregon Steam Navigation Company (owners and operators of the steamboat *Tenino*, controlled by the Northern Pacific Railroad), in Portland, Oregon.

Having toured the ports of Puget Sound, President Cass proposed a resolution “That this Committee will proceed to consider the question of fixing the terminus on Puget Sound of this Company’s Road, with the view of acting on a proposition in the hands of the President for the construction of the unfinished portion of the road between Tenino and Seattle.”

This is the moment of the official naming of Tenino.



First known use of “Tenino” for the to-be-built NPPR station.

Handwritten notes by Samuel Wilkeson, Secretary, from committee meeting minutes in Portland, Oregon on October 12, 1872.

Discussion ensued and the resolution was not adopted, and further discussion postponed for the full board in New York.⁴⁸

While Cass presented the resolution and thus is the first person recorded who used the name, it is unknown if the name was chosen by him or suggested by someone else in the group. In any event, the die was cast and from this date forward the “temporary” northern terminus would begin to be known by the name Tenino.

⁴⁸ Minnesota Historical Society. Northern Pacific Railway collection, 1864-1896. M459. Board of Directors Meeting Minutes. October 12, 1872.

The new name would take some time to enter general use, with Hodgden's Station continuing to be widely used for many months to come.

It is important at this time to note several important facts:

1. When this depot was named, **it did not exist**. The builders of the line had only been told the week before to extend the track the 66th mile to be closer to Hodgden's and to build a turn-table and temporary buildings. There were no running trains, so their numbering would not have mattered.
2. The name was **not bestowed locally**. It was first used in Portland, Oregon. In fact, it would be used next in the *Kalama Beacon* a week later on October 19th, and even then it would be called "Hodgden's" five times compared to the single use of "Tenino."⁴⁹ Weeks later the name would be used in an Olympia newspaper much closer to the actual depot. The use of the name traveled northward to the site, it did not originate there. Nothing local was used in its naming. Not survey stakes, car numbers, the area's previous names (Coal Bank or Hodgden's Station), or the valley's Native American name (Kla-pe-ad-am).
3. At the time of its naming, the Board and Committee were meeting at the offices of the Oregon Steam Navigation Company, with whom they had a very close and growing business association. They had just traveled up the Columbia River on OSN boats and met with the OSN officers the day before. **They would have undoubtedly known of the OSN's *Tenino* steamboat**, a part of their important transportation network on the upper Columbia River. The NPRR would advertise their connection to the

⁴⁹ "N.P.R.R. – Pacific Division," *Kalama Beacon*, October 19, 1872, 1.

OSN throughout 1873, but stopped by 1874 when they lost controlling interest.

4. The name was first used by the railroad president in a committee meeting. Cass and the committee members would immediately return to the east, **taking with them the knowledge of why the name was chosen**. They were in San Francisco by October 16th and in New York City where they held a meeting on November 20th.

First use of “Tenino” in the press

Since our last, the track-laying has been completed to Hodgden’s, sixty-five miles northward from Kalama.

For greater convenience of ground whereon to locate depot, side-track, etc., we hear that it is determined to immediately extend the road’s mile or more beyond Hodgden’s, we suppose the work will be performed by Mr. Hallett, who so energetically closed a thirty-miles contract at the point from where it is proposed to make the mile extension.

Next week, we hear that Mr. Shannon will resume rip-rapping, graveling, etc., on the line northward, with a considerable force.

The cars now run daily to Tenino (Hodgden’s)—leaving Kalama at 6:30 A.M., and reaching end of track about noon; returning, leaves about 1 P.M. for Kalama, reaching there about 6:30 P.M.

From Olympia, Coggan’s stages leave for Hodgden’s about 9 A.M.; and leave on return at 1 P.M., reaching Olympia at 4 o’clock.

The fare from Kalama to Olympia is \$7.50-\$5.50 to end of track, and \$2 stage fare to Olympia from Hodgden’s. Last winter \$12 was the fare over same route.

Kalama Beacon, October 19, 1872.

5. Tenino was meant to be **a temporary stop**. Therefore it does not seem to have been important enough at the time to make any specific record of its naming. Despite extensive research in various archives and papers of those who were present, no written record has yet been unearthed.

General Sprague, following orders to get the track producing traffic, and thus income, issued this rate schedule effective November 1, 1872.⁵⁰

NORTHERN PACIFIC RAILROAD COMPANY.											
Pacific Division.											
Local Freight Tariff---on Merchandise,											
BETWEEN STATIONS---In cents per 100 pounds.											
No. of Stations	Miles from KALAMA	STATIONS.		FREIGHT PAYABLE IN U. S. GOLD COIN.							
0		KALAMA,		For General Rules, Instructions,							
1	5	CARROLL'S,		Articles at double Rates, Spe-							
2	8	MONTICELLO,		cial Rates, Stock Rates,							
3	11	COWLITZ,		Table of Weights, Esti-							
4	20	CASTLE ROCK,		mates, Weights &c.,							
5	28	OLEQUA,		see General Tar-							
6	35	GRAND PRAIRIE,		iff Issued							
7	48	NEWAUKUM,		Nov. 1st,							
8	60	SKOOKUM CHUCK,		1872.							
9	66	TENINO,									

Kalama, W. T., November 1st, 1872.

J. W. SPRAGUE, General Agent.
CLARK T. MORRIS, Gen'l Freight & Ticket Ag't.

John C. Ainsworth papers
Special Collections and University Archives, University of Oregon

⁵⁰ John C. Ainsworth papers, 1858-1911. Collection 250, Box 11, Folder 3. Special Collections and University Archives, University of Oregon Libraries, Eugene, Oregon.

Map Showing stations along the NPRR Pacific Division line.⁵¹



[Note: Grand Prairie on the 1872 rate list is listed as Winlock on this 1880 map.]

⁵¹ "Colton's township map of Oregon & Washington Territory," (New York: Oregon Railway and Navigation Co., c1880), Library of Congress.
<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gmd/g4291p.rr005090>

Despite having announced a month earlier, on October 12, 1872, that “The railroad is now completed to Hodgedon’s and the cars will be running to that point in a few days.”⁵², on November 16th, 1872, Olympia’s *Washington Standard*, published: “The extension of the North Pacific railroad, from the old Tenino to the new town of that name, was completed last Tuesday [November 12th], and the cars will run thither on Monday next [November 18th]. Mr. Reinwald, the foreman of the job, has just finished the excavation for the round-house and put in the turn-table.”⁵³

Calling it an “extension” demonstrates that they considered the entire NPRR line connected, from the “old Tenino” (the OSN steamboat built in 1861/62) to the “new town” of Tenino (1872).

Operating on the upper reaches of the Snake River, the steamboat *Tenino* was one of the OSN’s (and thus NPRR’s) most distant connected points. And with the end of track near Hodgden’s at this point, the “new town of that name” provided the last of the pair of bookends bracketing the entire NPRR steam transportation network then available in 1872.

At this point it is worth noting, as mentioned earlier in the quote from Atkins, that it is also possible that there was a location on the Columbia River where the Tenino natives had built their summer village before being moved to the reservation in 1858, also called “Tenino.”⁵⁴ Research has been unable to locate proof of any such use of the name in maps, newspapers, or other documents contemporary with the NPRR’s visit, though one other newspaper article looking back from 1935 mentions there was once “a way station out from The Dalles called Tenino.”⁵⁵

⁵² *Washington Standard*, October 12, 1872, 2.

⁵³ *Washington Standard*, November 16, 1872, 2.

⁵⁴ “Origin of ‘Tenino’ is unsolved,” *Thurston County Independent*, January 3, 1936, 1.

⁵⁵ “Evidence of Tenino Name Search Points Two Ways,” *Thurston County Independent*, December 27, 1935, 1.

Given the committee's recent trip up the Columbia, meetings at the OSN offices, and discussions with Ainsworth, the committee certainly would have known about the steamboat *Tenino*, which seems likely to be the "old Tenino" mentioned in the *Washington Standard*. Ainsworth would certainly have been able to explain the Native American origin of the name as well.

The coming year looked bright for the Northern Pacific Railroad. They planned "one hundred and sixty miles will be completed from the Missouri river to the Yellowstone at the mouth of the Powder river, and two hundred and eight miles from the Columbia, near the mouth of the Snake river, to Pen d'Oreille Lake. From Kalama to mouth of Snake river, about three hundred miles, there is good river navigation including two railroad portages [owned and operated by OSN], and also Pen d'Oreille Lake and tributary river there is good navigation for one hundred and twenty miles- so that at the end of 1873, the company will have six hundred miles of steam communication at each end of the line, with a gap of seven hundred miles to be completed."⁵⁶

The Northern Pacific Railroad, and the public, considered the joint NPRR/OSN transportation network, made of steam locomotives and steam boats, to form a single "line" of "steam communication" from the terminus at the new depot in Tenino to the distant reaches of the Snake River plied by the old steamboat *Tenino*.

⁵⁶ "Railroad Matters," *Washington Standard*, December 14, 1872, 2.

After the Naming

In an interview with Roskelyn Wardle many decades later, she recalled arriving in Tenino on November 14, 1872, at the age of 13. She took the train from Kalama on the newly completed track.

Tenino in those days consisted of a depot, a store, and a house. The depot was also a restaurant and saloon and had four rooms upstairs for the accommodation of transients. The store was operated by Brown and Wakefield.

But that wasn't all there was to Tenino. Many tents of Chinamen dotted the prairie, the Orientals having been employed in building the railroad. Many of them stayed to work on the farms and find odd jobs.⁵⁷

In a 1935 article, early resident May Webster Jackson related:

At that time there were two houses on the prairie which were owned by Mr. Hodgden and Mr. Davenport, but the prairie was known as Hodgden's Prairie.

Railroad camps were established here for the railroad was not built into Tacoma at that time. Some of the railroad men had their families brought to this camp and the little town was started; only had one street next to the railroad and they called it Railroad Avenue. A few houses were built for the families and some far seeing man predicted this was a good place for a town, as it connected with the Olympia road and the mail stage.

A small office was built for the railroad company and was later rebuilt and became the depot. Fred Brown had followed the building of the railroad, carrying a small stock

⁵⁷ "Early Day History of Skookumchuck Related", *Thurston County Independent*, February 22, 1935, 1.

of merchandise in a tent store. As the railroad moved camp, he moved his tent, but when this place was reached he added more to his line and began to think it a good place to locate, as the farmers around were pleased to have a store so near at hand. They gave Mr. Brown their best support, so he went over to Tumwater to the sawmill and there purchased lumber for a building, which he built on Railroad Avenue and then carried dry goods and hardware.⁵⁸

By late November, the *Washington Standard* in a front page article about the “Progress of the Northern Pacific Railroad” was reporting the use of steamboats to augment the railroad in the Minnesota area (where “three steamers...ply on the Red river of the north”), along the upper Missouri (where “as many as thirty-three steamers have been employed”), and in Washington (where “reliable and constant steam navigation on the Columbia, which river carries this natural highway to the Pacific Ocean.”)⁵⁹

On December 7, 1872, the *Kalama Beacon* reported “On Monday last [Dec 2nd], the turn-table at Tenino (the northern terminus) was in working condition, having been completed on the previous Saturday [Nov 30th].”

By February 1873, the Columbia River & Puget Sound Stage Company (owned by George Coggan), was advertising in a Portland, Oregon newspaper for transportation “to the [Puget] Sound and Victoria [British Columbia], and from Victoria to Portland & California”.⁶⁰ Tickets were sold at the OSN’s office in Portland (offering a dollar savings) and agents on the NPRR train would guide them to the stage waiting at Tenino.

⁵⁸ “Mrs. Jackson Writes Early History of Tenino,” *Thurston County Independent*, March 8, 1935, 1.

⁵⁹ *Washington Standard*, November 23, 1872, 1.

⁶⁰ *Morning Oregonian*, February 19, 1873, 1.

Service was already being billed as a huge transportation network connecting distant Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, via steamers on Puget Sound, stages from Olympia to Tenino, the NPRR trains to Kalama, and OSN steamboats from Kalama to Portland and even as far as California.

The April 19, 1873 *Kalama Beacon* reported that Montgomery had been awarded the contract to build the 40 miles northward from Tenino. Clearing and grubbing had already begun.

In the spring of 1873, the railroad work was moving along toward Tacoma and more people were coming so a hotel was built next to the depot. When the railroad moved on to Tacoma, one owner, John McGrath moved on with it and opened a hotel there, leaving the Tenino hotel to his partner, William “Billy” Huston. The first license for “spirituous liquors” in Tenino was issued in May 1873.⁶¹

The *Washington Standard* reported:

We visited Tenino a few days ago, and found the town exceedingly dull, but was told that it was lively enough at night, when the railroad employees congregate there. One new building was going up, and the clearing and grading of Montgomery’s extension was making very favorable progress. Tenino has four saloons, two hotels, one store, a telegraph office, livery stable and the company’s work shops, offices, etc., and about thirty or forty resident inhabitants.⁶²

In May 1873, John C. Ainsworth, President of the Oregon Steam Navigation Company, was appointed Managing Director for the

⁶¹ “County Business”, *Washington Standard*, May 10, 1873, 2.

⁶² “Tenino”, *Washington Standard*, May 10, 1873, 2.

Northern Pacific affairs on the Pacific Coast.⁶³ He was instrumental in completing the line from Tenino to New Tacoma, which the railroad reached in December 1873.

About the time of the railroad reaching its northern terminus, A. B. Nettleton, Trustee's Agent, issued a letter for investors dated October 8, 1873 that included: "At Kalama, its southern end, it taps the Columbia river and connects with the boats of the Oregon Steam Navigation Company—a corporation three-fourths of whose share capital is controlled by the Northern Pacific Railroad Company, and which is paying regular dividends on its stock from the lucrative trade it enjoys. In this way connection is made with Portland and the other cities of Oregon, and by the completion of the Pacific Division an outlet to the sea over the N.P.R.R. is furnished for the grain and cattle of the Upper Columbia Valley in Eastern Washington. At Tacoma, its northern terminus, the Pacific Division connects with the steamboats of the North Pacific Steamship Co., and thus secures the trade of Puget Sound and adjacent waters. The traffic already enjoyed by the Pacific Division, before its completion to the Sound, indicates that it will be more than self-sustaining from the outset and profitable at an early day."⁶⁴

On September 18, 1873, Jay Cooke & Company, the financial backing for the Northern Pacific Railroad, declared bankruptcy and the railroad, and the country, was in deep trouble with what became known as the "Panic of 1873."

⁶³ Finding Aid of the Minnesota Historical Society for the Northern Pacific Railway collection, 1864-1896 M459. Viewed on March 18, 2019, <http://www2.mnhs.org/library/findaids/m0459.pdf>

⁶⁴ A. B. Nettleton. "Dear Sir" [printed letter to stockholders] from 'Trustees' Office, Northern Pacific Railroad Company, October 8, 1873. John C. Ainsworth papers, 1858-1911. Collection 250. Special Collections and University Archives, University of Oregon Libraries, Eugene, Oregon.

“...the Puget Sound Division, extending from Kalama on the Columbia River to New Tacoma, a raw town in the woods on the shore of the Sound, had just been completed, and was with difficulty made to pay operating expenses; a single mixed train of freight and passenger cars serving for its daily business. The river, sea and Sound transportation lines controlled by the Company through its ownership of stock in the Oregon Steam Navigation Company were abandoned, and the stock, first pledged for loans, was sold in default of payment.”⁶⁵

And so ownership and interest in the OSN’s steamboat *Tenino* passed out of NPRR’s hands about one year after they named the new depot.

It didn’t take long for the United States government to acknowledge the change of name. On November 17, 1873 the Post Office “Coal Bank” was officially renamed “Tenino.” And Fred Brown, the storekeeper, was made Postmaster.⁶⁶

Olympia residents, irritated at not being chosen as the northern terminus decided to build their own railroad and, after several years of having only a stage line connection, managed to connect by rail with the NPRR at Tenino in 1878.

The steamboat *Tenino* was rebuilt about 1876 and renamed the *New Tenino*. J. E. Akins, Master, Lewiston, Idaho, wrote: “In the year 1880, she was dismantled and the hull towed to Lewiston, where it was used for a wharf boat, until 1884, when an ice gorge in the Snake River tore her from her moorings and she was wrecked on an island just below the City of Lewiston.”⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Smalley, *History of the Northern Pacific Railroad*, 205.

⁶⁶ Guy Reed Ramsey, *Postmarked Washington: Thurston County*, (Thurston County, WA: Thurston County Historic Commission, 1988), 44.

⁶⁷ C. Lee Martin, “Origin of ‘Tenino’ is Unsolved,” *Thurston County Independent*, January 3, 1936, 1.

Tenino remained a very small town throughout the 1870s and 1880s, huddled around the depot. The 1887 R. L. Polk & Co.'s *Puget Sound Directory* gives the population of the “village” of Tenino as 75.



NPRR Track Plan from the 1880s⁶⁸

In 1889 Washington became a state.

The same year the Tenino Sandstone Company began shipping stone from their quarry adjacent to the NPRR tracks that were laid in 1872.

The town of Tenino became a boom town throughout the 1890s as quarrymen and laborers flocked to the growing community. Schools were built. Businesses opened. By the turn of the new century the population had exploded to more than 1,000.

The town was incorporated as the City of Tenino in 1906.

⁶⁸ James S. Hannum, *Delusions of Grandeur: The Olympia & Tenino Railroad*. (Hannum House, 2009), 56.

Conclusion

The origin of the naming of the city of Tenino is best understood in the context of the moment of its creation, when the Northern Pacific Railroad executives decided to build a temporary station that became the Tenino depot in October 1872.

Having just traveled by steamboat around Puget Sound seeking a site for the permanent end of the line and having journeyed up the Columbia River on the steamboats of the Oregon Steam Navigation Company, a subsidiary of the NPPRR, they were very much focused on the steam transportation network, both rail and boat, they were creating.

On the fateful naming day, October 12, 1872, the committee was meeting with President Ainsworth in the offices of the Oregon Steam Navigation Company, owners and operators of the steamboat *Tenino*, when President Cass first used the name Tenino for the northern temporary terminus location.

The first time it is recorded, the name is spelled out completely, not abbreviated. It uses the same spelling as the steamboat. The name was general knowledge in the Pacific Northwest at the time, especially along the Columbia River, and appears in several Portland newspapers in conjunction with the Oregon Steam Navigation Company.

It seems a logical conclusion that this is the origin of the name.

The origins of the Sahaptin word “Tenino”, as passed down through the steamboat, is found with the Native American name (first recorded in the 1855 treaty as “Tenino band”), when the boat was built near the Tenino’s fishing lands on the Columbia River.

The name of the depot was then used when the Town of Tenino was platted by the NPPRR’s subsidiary, the Lake Superior and Puget

Sound Company, and Stephen Hodgden the following spring of 1873, and carried forward with the town as it grew into the City of Tenino we know today.

As to the meaning of the name “Tenino”, in 1935, C. Lee Martin, Tenino School District Superintendent, in his series of articles concerning the origin of the name “Tenino”, contacted the Warm Springs Agency asking for more information.

“After considerable inquiry among our Indian people, I am unable to give you the definition of the word ‘Tenino’. Some of our old people claim that it is merely a word without a meaning.” - Superintendent F. W. Boyd, Warm Springs, Indian Agency, Oregon.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ C. Lee Martin, “Evidence of Tenino Name Search Points Two Ways,” *Thurston County Independent*, December 27, 1935, 1.

Chronology

- **1855.** The first written record using the name Tenino in the Treaty of 1855

Walla-Wallas; Alexis and Talk-ish, chiefs of the Tenino band of Walla-Wallas; Xine, chief of the ~~Jackman~~ or John Day's River band of Walla-Wallas; Mark, William Chenook, and Cusb-Kella, chiefs of the Dalles band of the Wascoes; Tobsimpa, chief of the Kigal twalla band of the Wascoes, and Wal-lachis, chief of the Dog River band of the Wascoes; which treaty is in the words and figures following, to wit:

- **1858.** Tenino natives removed to Warm Springs Reservation.
- **1861.** The Oregon Steam Navigation Company builds the steamboat Tenino at Celilo, naming it after the Native American tribe whose summer village had been nearby.
- **1864.** The United States Congress charters the Northern Pacific Railroad.
- **1871.** The NPRR creates their town, Kalama, and begins building the Pacific Division line northwards toward Puget Sound.
- **1872.** Spring. NPRR purchased 75% controlling interest in the Oregon Steam Navigation Company, owners of the steamboat *Tenino*.
- **1872.** April. Hallett begins grading southward from near Hodgden's Station going southward.
- **1872.** October 1st. Members of the NPRR Board Executive Committee, including President Cass, arrive in Kalama to begin meetings and tours of the Pacific Division.
- **1872.** Oct 2-4. The NPRR Pacific Coast Committee tours the Kalama line and ports along Puget Sound.
- **1872.** October 5th. Meeting in Kalama, the Executive Committee orders the Chief Engineer to build a 66th mile

north of Kalama and “necessary temporary buildings” including a turn-table.

- **1872.** October 7-10. The committee tours the OSN line up the Columbia River on board their steamboats.
- **1872.** October 11th. The committee meets in Portland, Oregon at the offices of the OSN. OSN officers Ainsworth, Thompson, and Reed make a presentation to the Pacific Coast Committee.
- **1872.** October 11th. In Executive Committee meeting at the Clarendon Hotel in Portland, they refer to Hodgden’s and “the present Northern terminus of the Road.”
- **1872.** October 12th. While meeting in the Oregon Steam Navigation Company offices in Portland, Oregon, President Cass uses the name “Tenino” for the first time, referring to the temporary depot to be erected at the current northern terminus of the line.
- **1872.** October 12th. This evening the Executive Committee left Portland on the steamer *John L. Stephens* for San Francisco and then returned back east.
- **1872.** October 19th. *The Kalama Beacon* prints “Tenino (Hodgden’s)”, the first appearance of the name in the press.
- **1872.** November 1st. General Sprague, Assistant Treasurer and General Agent, assumes the daily operations of the road between Kalama and Tenino.
- **1872.** November 16th. The *Washington Standard*, an Olympia newspaper, published: “The extension of the North Pacific railroad, from the old Tenino to the new town of that name, was completed”.
- **1872.** November 20th. The NPRR Board met in New York.
- **1872.** November 30th. *The Kalama Beacon* reported the turn-table at Tenino was completed and in working condition.

- **1873.** May. John C. Ainsworth, President of the Oregon Steam Navigation Company, was appointed Managing Director for the Northern Pacific Railroad affairs on the Pacific Coast.
- **1873.** May. The use of “T9o” by NPRR employees was noted as an abbreviation for the full name.
- **1873.** June 4th Thomas H. Canfield, President of the Lake Superior and Puget Sound Company, the subsidiary land agency for the Northern Pacific Railroad, finally signed “The Plan of Tenino”, which was recorded in Thurston County on July 5, 1873, creating the town of Tenino:
- **1873.** September 18th. Jay Cooke & Company, the financial backing for the Northern Pacific Railroad, declared bankruptcy. Shortly thereafter the Northern Pacific Railroad’s stock control of the Oregon Steam Navigation Company, and the steamboat *Tenino*, ends.
- **1880.** Steamboat *New Tenino* dismantled and its hull towed to Lewiston, Idaho.
- **1883.** September. The Northern Pacific Railroad completes its transcontinental railroad with a “golden spike” driven at Gold Creek, MT.
- **1888.** Fenton and Van Tine begin opening a sandstone quarry at Tenino. First stone would ship in 1889.
- **1889.** Washington becomes a state.
- **1890s.** Tenino booms with quarry workers and new people. New town additions are added due to the need for new lots. By 1900 the population has risen to more than 1,000.
- **1906.** Tenino incorporated as the City of Tenino.
- **1909.** The “mystery” of Tenino’s name appears in the press as a “dispute” between the railroad numbering stories and the Chinook language theory.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why the name “Tenino”?

While it is President Cass who first used the name “Tenino” for the depot in his resolution of October 12, 1872, it is unknown if it was his idea. It is interesting though that as a young man, Cass organized a steamboat line on the Monogahela River.⁷⁰

The committee was meeting at the offices of the Oregon Steam Navigation company in Portland, and the week before the committee had toured the Columbia River on the OSN boats.

They undoubtedly heard the name “Tenino” during this excursion.

Cass and the Committee would have seen or heard of the OSN’s steamboat *Tenino*. After all, they were on another OSN boat (the *Onyhee*) and went as far as Celilo and Wallula which were the *Tenino*’s ports.

It is possible that the old location of the Tenino’s summer village was still called Tenino and that the committee passed by it on the river. It is even possible that they saw natives fishing in the river and asked who they were and were told they were “Tenino Indians.”

It is well known that the railroad often used Native American names. NPRR’s first depot in the region, Kalama, was named after what the NPRR thought was a local tribe. In a very long letter dated March 21, 1871, probably from Thomas H. Canfield [President of the Lake Superior and Puget Sound Company] to "Gentleman," Canfield reports "Where we laid out a town by the

⁷⁰ “Funeral of General Cass,” *New York Tribune* March 25, 1888, 3.

name of Kalama, being the name of a tribe of Indians now extinct who inhabited this land.".⁷¹

Of course, not knowing the local history, it appears that the NPRR were mistaken since no such tribal name appears in early Washington Territory histories. Instead, it is likely that when they asked about the name of the local people, they were told “Kalama” because of resident John Kalama, a Hawaiian who worked for the Hudson’s Bay Company and after whom the nearby Kalama River is also named.⁷²

So it is also possible that Cass (or whoever came up with the idea), just thought that using Tenino was good because it was also a “local” Native American tribal name. In this case there actually was a Tenino tribal band, though by the time the committee went up the Columbia River in 1872, the natives had been removed to the Warm Springs Reservation for more than a decade.

There were three OSN steamboats on the river above Celilo: *Tenino*, *Yakima*, and *Owyhee* about this time.

The committee actually traveled on the *Owyhee*. The *Yakima*, also named after a Native American tribe, was also already a place name in Washington. Owyhee, an old variant spelling for Hawaii, was the name of an Idaho county formed in 1863, and Oregon also had an Owyhee River.

That leaves the steamboat *Tenino* as the only vessel on the distant river run owned by the OSN that did NOT already have a geographical location using the same name.

⁷¹ Email from Paul Carnahan, Librarian, Vermont Historical Society to Richard Edwards dated March 21, 2013.

⁷² James G. Y. Ho, “*Forgotten Hawaiians: The Pacific Northwest*,” accessed March 18, 2019, <http://www.northwesthawaii.com/forgothaw.htm>

The Tenino also held the steamboat record for traveling the farthest up the Snake River, having made it to Pittsburg Landing, about 75 miles above Asotin.⁷³

It seems likely that Cass and the committee became aware of the name because of the OSN steamboat, and were then made aware that the name was of Native American origin.

By choosing “Tenino”, they were able to connect their new depot with their larger transportation network, reference their steamboat, and use a unique, native word all at the same time!

Linking the name with the steamboat *Tenino* on the upper Columbia River was also a good marketing tool. As alluded to in the November 16, 1872 article in the *Washington Standard*, the concept was to be able to advertise the length of the route possible from the upper river, where the OSN steamboat *Tenino* ran, to the end of the current NPRR line, which was also named Tenino.

How was the knowledge of the origin of the name’s connection to the steamboat *Tenino* lost?

Following the naming on October 12, 1873 at a NPRR meeting, most of the officers present headed for San Francisco and then points east. Most of the people who might have known the origin of the depot’s name left never to return to the Pacific Northwest.

The name was given in Portland, Oregon, not locally in Tenino. The name “Tenino” wasn’t a mystery in Portland where it appeared in newspapers referring to the steamboat, so there was no initial doubt as to its origin and no need to record the origin story.

The OSN was only owned by NPRR for about 18 months from early 1872 to late 1873. In 1873 the OSN stock was sold due to

⁷³ Gordon R. Newell, ed., *The H. W. McCurdy Marine History of the Pacific Northwest* (Seattle: Superior Publishing Company, 1966), 206.

NPRR defaulting on its debts. Once the connection of the NPRR to the OSN (and thus their steamboat *Tenino*) was lost, there was no reason to mention the connection.

John C. Ainsworth, the OSN President, took advantage of this situation and purchased the stock at less than he had sold it to NPRR, regaining ownership as well as a profit. In 1879 the NPRR under the direction of Mr. Villard would once again purchase the OSN, but this time forming a new company, the Oregon Railway and Navigation Company, thus ending the history of the Oregon Steam Navigation Company.⁷⁴

The steamboat *Tenino* itself was rebuilt in 1876 as the “New Tenino” and then finally ended its career about 1880.

During the 1880s, Tenino was a very small town and unlikely to garner much interest in its recent origin story.

The two men mostly likely to know the true answer died in 1893, Captain Ainsworth in California and General Sprague in Tacoma, WA.

By the 1890s, when the influx of new residents to the town of Tenino were no doubt asking about the name’s origin, the steamboat was long gone. Its previous career on the upper Columbia and Snake Rivers was far away, both in time and distance.

Didn’t General Sprague name the town Tenino?

Some authors, including McArthur in his *Tenino Washington: The Decades of Boom & Bust*, and Mae Webster Jackson in her 1935 newspaper interview, stated that General John W. Sprague, who was General Agent in the Pacific Division, gave Tenino its name.

⁷⁴ Eugene V. Smalley, *History of the Northern Pacific Railroad* (New York: Putnam, 1883), 257-8.

None of these authors provide any documentation as to why they had this belief. I can only assume that it was based on Sprague being the first officer given control and management of the daily operation of the Kalama to Tenino line.⁷⁵

However, while the Executive Committee minutes *summary* for October 11, 1872 states “The management of the business of this completed section was placed in the hands of General Sprague, with entire control”, the actual, *original minutes* state that “the management of the business of the completed road and the completion of the ballasting be placed in the hands of General Sprague the Assistant Treasurer and General Agent on the 1st of November proximo, and that he have entire control and direction of all persons employed in connection therewith.”⁷⁶

The orders from the October 5th meeting, to construct the 66th mile of track near Hodgden’s Station were addressed to the Chief Engineer, not General Sprague. On October 7th, a letter from Frederick Billings, acting as Managing Director, was sent to General Sprague in Kalama.⁷⁷ Sprague’s name does not appear on the list of those present at the meetings in Portland on October 11th or 12th.

It seems unlikely Sprague would have been in position to name the new depot until after November 1st, which was more than two weeks after the depot had already been named.

Sprague himself never seems to have made any recorded statement as to the origin of the name.

⁷⁵ Smalley, *Book of Reference*, 98.

⁷⁶ “Northern Pacific Railroad, Executive Committee Meeting Minutes,” October 11, 1872. Minnesota Historical Society, Northern Pacific Secretary’s Records, 136.D5.2F.

⁷⁷ “October 7, 1872 letter, Billings to Sprague,” Minnesota Historical Society, Land Department Records, Northern Pacific Railway (M446, reel 8).

Local Folktales about the naming of Tenino

Twenty or more years after the town's founding, during the boom years of growth in the 1890s and early 1900s, the newcomers likely began to ask, "Why is this place named 'Tenino' and what does it mean?"

Old time residents knew the railroad had named it, and that the abbreviation "T9o" or "T90" had been in use since nearly the beginning. Some felt it might have something to do with the Native Americans. But no one knew exactly when or where or how the town had come to be named.

So they told stories. These tales were usually related to the railroad or natives, but often with different twists and nuances. And in a way, the stories have the kernel of truth. The railroad did name the depot and thus the town, and the name is related to a Native American name.

But as local historian and Tenino High School Principle, Mr. Martin very wisely concluded: "If investigations show that the word 'Tenino' was a word of common use in the Northwest history before the town was named, it would seem, then, to cast doubts upon the old ideas about numbers on grade stakes, box cars, and engines, unless there is a remarkable coincidence of name."⁷⁸

The Railroad Numbering Story

The Northern Pacific Railroad did name Tenino. The local stories revolve around the railroad using "Tenino" as a homophone for a number or number-letter combination that was used by the NPRR.

⁷⁸ C. Lee Martin, "Evidence on Origin of 'Tenino' Accumulates," *Thurston County Independent*, December 20, 1935, 1.

The suggested origins include “T90” or “10-9-0” as perhaps a locomotive number, a railcar number, or a survey stake number.

It is true that just a few months after the naming of Tenino, a California newspaper was reporting “Since the N.P. railroad started on its way down the Sound, the name of the late terminus (Tenino) has been abbreviated to T9o.”⁷⁹

One important thing to note here is that even at this early date (May 1873), the use of “T9o” was noted as **an abbreviation** for the full name, not the origin of the name.

It makes sense that NPRR employees, wishing to use an abbreviation for what was a minor depot along the Pacific Division route, quickly adopted this shorthand.

It would not have taken much imagination for locals to seize upon the early used abbreviation as the origin and then embellish it with some likely cause, such as locomotive numbering or survey stakes.

Additionally, the mystery of an unknown origin evolving from unique, almost code-like circumstances, gives this story a lot of notoriety. It even came to the attention of a national audience thanks to Ripley’s *Believe It or Not*, who published this origin myth (suggesting survey stake markings) in 1949.

In his *Origin of Washington Geographic Names*, Meany states: “George T. Reid, of Tacoma, says: ‘Most railroad men claim that the town derived its name from the coincidence that, in numbering the survey stations, this point was numbered 1090, usually spoken of as ‘ten-nine-o.’ I have, however, heard this disputed.”⁸⁰

⁷⁹ “The Territories”, *Sacramento Daily Union*, May 28, 1873, 1.

⁸⁰ Edmond S. Meany. *Origin of Washington Geographic Names*. (Seattle, University of Washington, 1923), 304.



Seattle Post-Intelligencer
October 7, 1949

This sort of story was repeated many times over the decades. C. Lee Martin, local High School Principal, wrote a series of articles about the origins of the name Tenino in the Thurston County Independent:

Quoted from H. Anderson: "While I was overseas one day I was called into the Major's office of the Commissary Department when he found I was from Tenino; and he asked me if I knew how the place was named, and then told me that he was the construction engineer for the N.P.R.R. who surveyed there, and that the name

came from the grade stake set at the place—“T-9-0”, numbered just like that, as I remember.”⁸¹

Martin concluded: “This claim of some railroad people that the town name originated as quoted from some of them, so far as I am able to determine, is not backed up by any evidence, only opinions by John Does of the N.P.R.R.”⁸²

In his discussion of this issue in his book *Tenino Washington: The Decades of Boom & Bust*, author Scott McArthur states: “a letter from the chief engineer of the Northern Pacific Railroad who said there was no survey station 1090 at Tenino and, likewise, no locomotive No. 1090 was on the route.”⁸³

Eminent Tenino historian, Arthur Dwelley, after years of study and research stated: “There is much speculation about the original name, with stories that it was named after a railroad locomotive with the number 1090, or a survey stake with that designation marked on it. According to the railroad archives, neither of these tales is true.”⁸⁴

The only locomotive in use on the NPRR track from Kalama prior to the naming of Tenino was the Minnetonka.

In a copy of an NPRR inventory list in from the early 1870s in the John C. Ainsworth Papers, the cars are listed as: Minnetonka (no number) and Passenger cars (nos. 1 & 2) and Baggage cars (No 1-3). Freight cars are not numbered in the inventory, but the list shows only 42 of them. Nothing comes anywhere near 1090.

⁸¹ *Thurston County Independent*, 20 Dec 1935, 1.

⁸² C. Lee Martin, “Attempt Made to Trace Origin of Word ‘Tenino’”, *Thurston County Independent*, December 13, 1935, 1.

⁸³ Scott McArthur, *Tenino Washington Decades of Boom & Bust*, 141-142.

⁸⁴ Arthur Dwelley, “Short History of Tenino, Washington,” viewed on March 16, 2019, <http://www.oocities.org/elechtle/texts/teninohistory.html>

The story that the name was derived from railroad numbering is simply an engaging fabrication.

The Chinook Language Story

Another group of people, this time academics, looking for an etymologically linked reason for the name, decided it must be a local name in the local native language. Since the nearest tribe, the Nisqually, called the area “Kla-pe-ad-am”⁸⁵ and that didn’t seem to apply, they had to get creative.

In a letter from William Ragless, early Tenino resident, he states: “I was informed that an Indian first called the name TENINO and stated his Grandfather first spoke the name TENINO, which the Indian said, meant STOP, as the stage road stopped at the N.P. depot in Tenino.”⁸⁶

It is interesting to note that even though Ragless was an early NPRR employee (“I first came to Tenino when it was only a stage station, with the end of the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1872.”) he does not tell the story of a stake or train number.

His story, like so many, states he was “informed”. That is, he had no first-hand knowledge, but rather it was a story told to him, too.

At the beginning of the 20th century, in 1903 in his *A History of the Puget Sound Country*, the author William Prosser stated:

In 1872 the Northern Pacific Railway extended its Portland and Tacoma line through this portion of the county and located a station in this community, naming it Tenino – an Indian word signifying “Junction.” The Junction referred to was that of the old military roads.

^{85 85} J. A. Costello, *The Simash: their life, legends and tales: Puget Sound and Pacific Northwest*. (Seattle, Calvert, 1895), 184.

⁸⁶ *Thurston County Independent*, December 20, 1935, 1.

During the Indian war a military road was constructed from Port Vancouver up the Cowlitz valley, then over to Fort Steilacoom. Near the farms of Hodgson and Davenport it forked, and a branch ran into Olympia. In the Chinook jargon this fork was called a “tenino.”⁸⁷

It is worth noting that Prosser’s background was as a politician and member of the U.S. Congress as a Representative for the state of Tennessee. His first experience in the Pacific Northwest came in 1879 when he was appointed as a special agent of the Department of the Interior for Oregon, Washington, and Idaho, and yet he appears to be the origin of the Chinook Jargon theory despite citing no authoritative linguistic sources.

Meany continues Prosser’s story in his 1923 book, and is the most often cited source for those arguing this origin.⁸⁸

S. E. Lewis in 1935 related:

“Evidently you are having quite a time solving the meaning of Tenino. I landed in Tenino September 25, 1897, shortly thereafter hearing a citizen of the town say that it meant “a meeting of the ways”. Who the man was I do not recall. Evidently he was a citizen of the town at that time. The natural drain-ways leading into the town would be suggestive that the above is correct. Here is hoping that this great controversy will be settled peaceably and soon.”⁸⁹

Local historian and Tenino High School Superintendent, Mr. Martin, also addressed the story of a Native American name:

⁸⁷ William Prosser, *A History of the Puget Sound Country: its resources, its commerce and its people*, (New York: Lewis Publishing, 1903), 248.

⁸⁸ Meany. *Origin of Washington Geographic Names*, 304-305.

⁸⁹ *Thurston County Independent*, January 3, 1936, 1.

To clear this up I wrote a letter to E. H. Thomas of Seattle, who is perhaps the best living authority on the Chinook Jargon, and who has written the most complete modern book on this Jargon in this generation.

Quote Mr. Thomas: “It is not Jargon, neither is it from the Old Chinook Indian language.”

Other Indian languages do not use this word “Tenino” to mean a “fork”—in this state.⁹⁰

The name comes from the Tenino Native Americans who speak Sahaptin, a language group that includes the Nez Perce and other tribes of eastern (not western) Washington, Idaho, and Oregon.

⁹⁰ *Thurston County Independent*, December 13, 1935, 1.

Afterword

This book presents what I believe is sufficient historical evidence to make a reasonable conclusion as to the origins of the naming of the city of Tenino and put to rest the myths concerning the name.

The depot (and thus the town) was named after the steamboat *Tenino* which was named after the Tenino Native American band.

In 1935 C. Lee Martin said:

If investigations show that the word “Tenino” was a word of common use in Northwest history before the town was named, it would seem, then, to cast doubts upon the old ideas...⁹¹

Before the depot was built, the name “Tenino” was indeed in use in two different, but connected, instances in the Pacific Northwest, especially in the regions touched by the Columbia River. The steamboat *Tenino* was well known and mentioned in Washington and Oregon newspapers throughout the 1860s.

The steamboat *Tenino*, through the Oregon Steam Navigation Company and the Pacific Coast Committee’s tour, had a direct connection with the Northern Pacific Railroad Company and the men who named the NPRR depot at that fateful moment in 1872.

The result is history.

⁹¹ C. Lee Martin “Attempt Made to Trace Origin of Word ‘Tenino’” *Thurston County Independent*, December 13, 1935, 1.

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How Tenino got its name.

As far back as the early 1900s the origin of the name of the city of Tenino has been disputed. In 1909 *The Coast* magazine wrote:

There is some dispute as to how the town was named. Some say it is an Indian name meaning “meeting of the ways.” Others say that in the early days it was a railroad terminal and designated by the number 1090, called by railroad men “ten ninety.” It afterwards was called what it is now, “Tenino.”

The author failed to even list the true answer among the possibilities.

After months of painstaking research, Tenino City Historian Rich Edwards has uncovered evidence that connects the town’s naming on the fateful day of October 12, 1872 by the Northern Pacific Railroad, to its actual origin.



Richard A. Edwards has been the Tenino City Historian since 2018 and is a member of the Washington State Historical Society, the South Thurston Historical Society, and serves as a volunteer docent at the Tenino Depot Museum.

He holds a Bachelor of Arts in History from Washington State University and a Masters of Librarianship from the University of Washington. He is retired from the Washington State Library.



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