

## SEATTLE AND THE INDIANS OF PUGET SOUND.

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### SEALTH

Chief of the Nisquallies,  
A Firm Friend of the Whites,  
For Him the City of Seattle  
Was Named by Its Founders.

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This is the inscription proposed to be placed upon a monument built by the municipality of Seattle, at the corner of Denny Way and Fifth Avenue. It is objectionable for a number of reasons:

1. The Nisquallies never had a chief named Sealth.
2. No chief named Sealth was known as the "firm friend of the Whites."
3. The City of Seattle was not named by its founders for or after either "Sealth" or the "Chief of the Nisquallies."

It is a well-known fact that the founders of Seattle named their town after Chief Seattle. Of course, they gave it his name, and not Sealth's, or Leschi's, or Patkanim's, or Kitsap's, or that of any other chief contemporary with him they chose to recognize and honor. Any other supposition is discreditable to the founders—the Dennys, Boren, Bell, Yesler and Maynard. It would have been quite as absurd to name the town for Sealth and call it Seattle, as it would have been to name the State for Washburn and call it Washington. If they had intended to name and call their town for Sealth, the city today would have been Sealth and not Seattle.

There is no published record, either book or newspaper, of any Sealth until within about twenty years, and no one has known a Sealth during that period of time. The Indian whose name was taken for our city lived as Seattle until 1866, died as Seattle, and was buried as Seattle. His sons were also called Seattle, and all of his descendants repudiate knowledge of any one known as Sealth.

It is said that there was an Indian whose baptismal name was Noah Sealth. This may be true, and may not. If true it may not have been Chief Seattle. If meant for Chief Seattle it undoubtedly was a blunder on the part of the officiating priest.

Seattle did not talk English or Chinook, and the priests in those days were men who spoke French fluently, but English quite imperfectly. Their records were often, if not always, kept in French. Intelligent communication between them and Indians like Seattle was very difficult, and frequently impossible. Under the circumstances, it is quite unlikely that he asked the priest to name him Noah. As far as known to the writer there is no record of such baptism and such naming, though repeated and diligent efforts have been made, at many places, to learn of it.

The priests of the earliest days on Puget Sound were Demers, who conducted the first religious service in Seattle, and who was the first Bishop at Victoria, getting the latter appointment in 1847; Blanchet, the Vicar-General and first Archbishop of Oregon; Bolduc, who was here as early as 1840; Ricard, Jayol, d'Herbonnez, Chirouse, Rossi, Vari, and perhaps others whose names are not now at command, down to Prefontaine and Kautan yet among us. As far as possible, their records have been looked up, and in them Indians have been found mentioned who are said to have been named Saitala, Sohtala, Siatlah, Siatla, Siatle, Salatalh and Seat'tlh, whose wife was said to be Hewyik. These may all have been connected with the Seattle family, and they may not have been. The records do not show. D'herbonnez baptised in "Siatlah," Henri, son of Siatlah and Hilo. In the list of contributors for a church at Puyallup, Chief Salatalh appears on the record as giving one-fourth of the whole cost, and Oiahl, his wife, as also giving one-fourth. Whether this "Chief Salatalh" was our Chief Seattle, it is impossible now to tell. It is well known that there was a Seattle family among the Puyallups. A dozen years ago a young Seattle, from Puyallup, took prominent part in a Fourth of July celebration in the City of Seattle. Admitting for a moment that the Indians named were all of the Seattle family, it is plain that the priests had no fixed form of spelling for the name. Each one in the written record approached the sound as nearly as he could, and he did so without reference to the efforts of the other priests or to the understanding of the American settlers, as they, in some cases, continued to use their own forms of spelling after the name Seattle was given to the town on Elliott Bay.

The record of Noah Sealth may have been burned or lost, if it ever existed. There seems to have been no repetition of the name, and as far as reported no other Sealth ever lived in this country. Putting the name upon the tombstone of Chief Seattle was an unfortunate error, repetition of which, upon the proposed monument, would be historically distressing.

It is evident that there really never was a Puget Sound Indian named Sealth. The sooner the idea is dismissed from the public mind, and forgotten, the better.

This proposed monument has called out two other questions:

1. Who was Seattle?
2. Who were the Nisquallies?

There is no real doubt that Seattle was a Suquamish or Suquamish Indian. According to George Gibbs, his mother was a Duwamish woman, through whom he obtained his chieftainship in the Duwamish tribe. Mr. A. A. Denny corroborates what Mr. Gibbs says, and the statement was undoubtedly correct. Seattle, however, did not live with or among the Duwamishes. His home was among the Suquamishes, near Port Madison. Notwithstanding their proximity, their common interests, and his being chief of both tribes, the Suquamish and Duwamish Indians were somewhat antagonistic and at times rather unfriendly.

In the war of 1855-56, the Duwamish Indians were either neutral or hostile to the whites; the Suquamish Indians were either neutral or friendly. It was proposed to remove the Duwamishes from the influences of other hostile Indians, by placing them upon the reservation with the Suquamishes, and their feeding and care instead of becoming less is daily growing greater." The Suquamish Indians were the more numerous, 441 of them in 1857, against

378 Duwamish Indians. Under the circumstances, Seattle was more closely connected with the Suquamishes than with the Duwamishes; he chose to be so; and his chieftainship among them was more of a reality than that among the Duwamishes. It is, therefore, more nearly correct to speak of him as a Suquamish and as Chief of the Suquamishes, than as a Duwamish and Chief of the Duwamishes, he being so regarded by Gibbs, Denny, Shaw, Simmons, Maynard, Stevens, Paige, and others connected and acquainted with our Indian affairs half a century ago. It would be entirely proper to speak of Seattle as chief of the Suquamish, Duwamish and allied tribes, upon the monument referred to, but it would be far from right to refer to him there as chief only of the Duwamishes—the lesser tribe, and one with which he had least connection and influence.

It has been stated in one of the papers recently that Wm. H. Dall, a well known Pacific Coast authority on ethnological subjects, had said, in a report prepared by him in 1876, that "Seattle was chief of the Indians of the Nisqually nation." This was a mistake. Dall at that time contributed a valuable paper concerning the Indians of Alaska, but said not a word of Seattle, the Nisqually or other Indians hereabout.

The only authority for the use of the name Nisqually upon this monument, or in connection with the middle and lower Sound Indians, is obtained from George Gibbs, who in 1855-56 wrote a paper upon the Indians of the Columbia River region, the Chehalis, Puget Sound and the west coast of Washington. Mr. Gibbs was quite learned, as may be inferred when it is stated that he came to Washington commissioned by Governor I. I. Stevens as geologist and ethnologist in connection with the Northern Pacific surveys under Captain Geo. B. McClellan, in 1853; that in addition he was a doctor of medicine, an attorney at law, a ready clerk and author of good repute. Besides all these things, Gibbs took a land claim in Pierce County, and pretended to be a farmer. He discovered what many men before him had discovered, and what a million people have since discovered, that the Puget Sound Indians were practically one people, one family, with one line of ancestors, and with much in common in the way of habits, languages and general characteristics.

Mr. Gibbs' home was on what was called the Nisqually plain, and he was near the Nisqually Indians—in fact in their very midst. It became convenient to him, when he wanted to speak of this great Indian family, to have a name that he could apply to all in common, and he chose for this purpose that of the Indians he

was nearest and knew best. If he had been located thirty miles further north, he probably would have called these Indians the Suquamish Nation, or maybe the Duwamish, and that this would have been more fitting than the Nisqually is undoubted, as the center of his so-called nation was where the City of Seattle now stands, and the center of population was likewise here.

Mr. Gibbs, or Dr. Gibbs, makes it plain that the connection between these Indians was quite insignificant. The Hood's Canal Indians had a language so different that they could hardly make themselves understood by the Indians elsewhere; there was a difference between the Nisqually and Suquamish dialects; the Snohomish and Snoqualmie, though adjoining tribes, by no means used the same language; and a like report was made of the Lummi and Nooksacks. There was nothing in common in the way of government. Each band or tribe had its own chief or chiefs and managed its own affairs.

The Snoqualmie and Nisqually Indians were in many respects more alike than any others, and yet the Snoqualmies would have fiercely scorned the appellation "Nisqually." Patkanim and Leschi, the respective chiefs, were bitter enemies. Leschi and his Nisquallies led off in the war upon the whites; Patkanim and the Snoqualmies were the open and enlisted allies of the white men. When the treaties were prepared by Stevens, Simmons, Shaw and Gibbs, which men, with others, signed them as parties and witnesses, there was no mention of any Nisqually nation except among the Nisqually tribesmen. Had there been the Puyallups, Squaxons, Skagits and others would have strongly demurred, and would not knowingly have affixed their X-marks to such papers. The United States Government chose to consider all the tribes as nations, and it made treaties with them as formally as though they actually were great, distant and foreign peoples.

Carrying out this idea, Gov. Stevens and Dr. Gibbs and their party, in 1854-55, dealt with the various aggregations of Indians separately, consolidating as many as they could, and calling upon those to sign who dwelt near together and were closely allied. If Seattle had been chief of the Nisquallies he would have been present and signed the Medicine Creek treaty of December 26, 1854. Having nothing to do with that nation, he was not asked to participate in the treaty making there.

At the next place, however, the white men dealt with the Suquamish-Duwamish nation or nations, and there Seattle had proper place, he being the first Indian signer of the Point Elliott Treaty of January 15th, 1855. Whether he knew it or not, he

was then and there put upon the treaty paper as chief of the Suquamish and Duwamish tribes, and probably so placed by George Gibbs himself. Patkanim represented his Indians, the Snoqualmies and Snohomishes; and Goliah the Skagits and others. Leschi and the Nisquallies did not interfere, and it was well for them they did not, as the stronger tribes of the lower Sound would have resented such action, blood would have flown, and the Nisquallies would have been wiped out. And so it was with the other Stevens treaties. The Governor knew no great Nisqually nation, but he did know a little Nisqually nation, and a number of other little nations of other names, the people of which were more numerous and powerful than the Nisquallies themselves, and who were politically as disconnected and independent as any other Indian tribes in Washington, Oregon or California.

The Vancouver expedition of 1792, the Wilkes expedition of 1841, the Hudson Company, the American missionaries and first settlers, Governor Stevens, the treaty maker, the military, the more recent inhabitants of the country, all, but George Gibbs, failed to find the Nisqually nation that he found, covering as he declared the country from the Chehalis to the Strait of Fuca and Bellingham Bay. But Gibbs' position was not a positive one, or a contention; it was more of a suggestion, thrown out, perhaps, for popular acceptance, but which encountered disfavor and rejection instead. With all due respect to him, his learning and research, it may be said his spellings of Indian names have been received with similar disfavor. Many of them are beyond present day recognition. Not one in ten has been preserved as he wrote it. He was not in all respects such an authority as attempt has been made to have him appear in the matter now before us—at any rate, not a popular and generally accepted authority. But for this matter of the monument, his Nisqually nation, maybe, would never again have been heard from. Hereafter, it will be well to let it, with Sealth, rest in peace.

An inscription for the monument that would be appropriate and truthful would be this:

SEATTLE.

1786-1866.

Chief of the Suquamish, Duwamish and Lesser Tribes of  
Puget Sound Indians,

Friend Alike of the Red Man and of the White,

For Him the City of Seattle

Was Named by its Founders.

—THOMAS W. PROSCH.

1861

**STEPHEN A. DOUGLAS: A STUDY OF THE ATTEMPT TO  
SETTLE THE QUESTION OF SLAVERY IN THE TERRI-  
TORIES BY THE APPLICATION OF POPULAR  
SOVEREIGNTY—1850-1860.**

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[Continued from Last Quarterly.]

**Popular Sovereignty in Kansas.**

The introduction of the Kansas-Nebraska bill produced an unprecedented storm.<sup>1</sup> The newspapers followed the lead of the Independent Democrats in exciting and guiding public opinion. The Northern Whig journals unanimously opposed the act and the Democratic press was divided. Those papers loyal to the administration favored the bill, the more independent condemning it. Douglas was burned in effigy from Boston to Ohio. Speakers in public meetings, and legislatures, condemned the bill and passed resolutions against it, but Douglas remained firm and the South rapidly rallied to the support of the bill.<sup>2</sup> This support on the part of the papers and people of the South was largely because the bill was so vigorously denounced by Northern sections which were looked upon as abolitionist centers. Still, there were many in the South who were not moved to approval of the bill by Northern opposition.<sup>3</sup>

In the North, steps were immediately taken to form a new party embracing all those opposed to the Kansas-Nebraska bill and the repeal of the Missouri Compromise. In the Northwestern States and in Maine this new party took the name Republican, but in most of the Eastern States the opposition was drawn into the Whig and Know-Nothing parties, or into a more or less complete fusion of Whigs, Free Soilers and Democrats. The election returns showed that the Republicans or anti-Nebraska party carried all the Northwestern States except Illinois. In the East it was impossible to figure out exactly how things stood owing to the many varieties of fusion, and the sudden rise of the Know-Nothing party. Douglas claimed that the whole anti-Nebraska campaign had miscarried, though the administration had lost control of nine States and sixty-two seats in the House of Representa-

<sup>1</sup>Seward, "Life of Seward," II, p. 222.

<sup>2</sup>Rhodes, I, p. 463.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., I, pp. 463-70.