

UMAPINE HISTORY

How Umapine Was Named

Originally called Vincent, the name was changed to Umapine when the post office was established there, as there was another town in Oregon named Vincent.

According to some early residents, the town was named after Chief Umapine of the Cayuse Indians. Dean Beauchamp remembers his father telling him the name was suggested by Louis Hodgen, who had farmed on the Indian reservation where he knew and respected the chief.

Umapine Indians

The word “Umapine” in Indian language means “friends”. Chief Umapine was the chief of the Cayuse tribe, which settled in the Umapine area, and used Williams land near the Hudson Bay Farm for grazing their ponies.

The Indians ate Camas root and Couse, and tanned elk, deer, and buffalo hides for tents and clothing. To tan the hides the Indians would let the hides soak in brine, then stretch the hides and scrape them until they were paper-thin. They would then take the hides down and smoke them over the fire to get a brown color.

Upon an Indian’s death, the relatives gave away most of the Indian’s belongings, and would also bury some of the deceased Indian’s articles with him. The Indian’s wives wore black for one or more years and didn’t participate in the dancing or other activities for the same length of time.

Umapine became chief of the Cayuse Indians in 1909. His father, whose name was also Umapine, was the chief figure in a deed that possibly saved Pendleton from an Indian attack. During the Piute-Bannock War of 1878, Chief Eagen of the Bannocks had been harassing the white people in the Pendleton area for some time. Finally, the white settlers offered a \$1,000 bounty for Chief Eagen’s capture. When Chief Umapine learned of this, he took braves and killed Eagen. They brought his head into Pendleton on a pole.

Early History of the Milton-Freewater Area

Published by the Valley Herald, Inc.

Milton-Freewater, Oregon

1962