

The Indian heritage

By HU BLONK
Wenatchee World special writer

MANSON — Where Indians once raced horses and rode bucking broncos, there are now expensive homes arising on Wapato Point on Lake Chelan.

The drastic change from the idyllic past to the bustling hordes of recreationists now crowding the sandy shores of the point is the result of a recent development boom.

The Indian-owners allowed no construction on the point itself until after the rest of the peninsula was developed to prevent the choicest



BILL EVANS

land being gobbled up and the rest of the land being neglected by developers.

But now after some 175 condominiums have been developed,

who thought the Earth Mother was angry with them.

The Chelan band that the Wapatos became affiliated with once traded with Indians living in Western Washington. They would paddle to the head of Lake Chelan and from there make their way over a steep, poor trail to the summit of the Cascades and down the west slope, following the Skagit River. Chelan tradition has it they fought westside tribes at times.

The Wapatos came to Manson during a "time of containment," Evans recalled.

"They were no longer allowed to roam; they were made to give up their nomadic ways," he said.

The Wapatos could no longer get roots and berries on Badger Mountain, get celery and onions at Chelan and hunt for deer on the North Shore, Evans related. They were expected to make a living off their land.

Evans is proud of the way his ancestors accepted this startling alteration of their lifestyle at a time they much preferred the old ways.

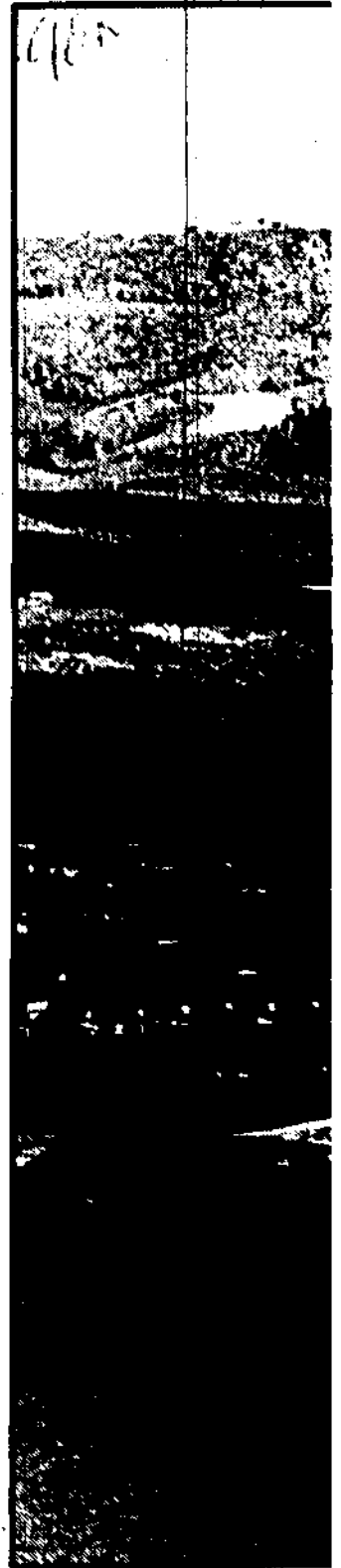
"They were adaptable, willing-to-change people," Evans said. "They were always aggressive, willing to accept challenge."

Wapato John planted a seven-acre orchard on the point. Later, Peter Wapato operated a 35-acre orchard nearby. The Indians raised hogs and horses, and also grew corn, beans, grapes, berries, cabbage, and potatoes.

The latter crop caused him to be called Wapato, which means "potatoes" in the Indian language.

"They survived on what they raised," Evans said.

Evans remembers the Wapatos walked horses over their beans to thrash them, spreading potatoes,



the point itself is going forth, including the sale of 85 lots on a 92-year lease basis and the building of an additional 75 condominiums nearby.

Wapato Point is located on one of three 640-acre allotments given the Wapato Indian family under the Moses Agreement of 1883 and now held in trust for them by the federal government.

Wapato John, who originally lived near the mouth of the Entiat River, was given a choice of either accepting one of those allotments or being put on the Colville Indian Reservation.

Two other heads of households — Wapato John's son, Peter Wapato, and his daughter, Mary Wapato — got the same offer. All three decided to move to Lake Chelan.

The point is located on part of Peter Wapato's original holdings, the Mill Bay Resort on Wapato John's land, and the Old Mill Bay boat launching area on Mary Wapato's property.

Incidentally, Wapato John's name is reversed from the son's and daughter's because it was the Indian custom that an offspring accept the given name of a parent as their surname. That tradition was broken when "civilization" came, according to his great-grandson Bill Evans.

Wapato John, who ran a trading post at the mouth of the Entiat River, moved to Lake Chelan after the great earthquake of 1872 occurred. It blocked the Columbia River and frightened the Indians

and later produce and covering them with straw to preserve them and later kicking the snow away to get at them. They also chopped ice out of Lake Chelan to preserve their food.

The point was a bleak place when the Indians came.

"It was bare; there were only a couple of pine trees," Evans said. "But each time they were able to raise \$15, they'd buy a truckload of trees from a North Dakota nursery. They wanted to change the atmosphere."

That's why there are such trees as Russian olives and black locusts today.

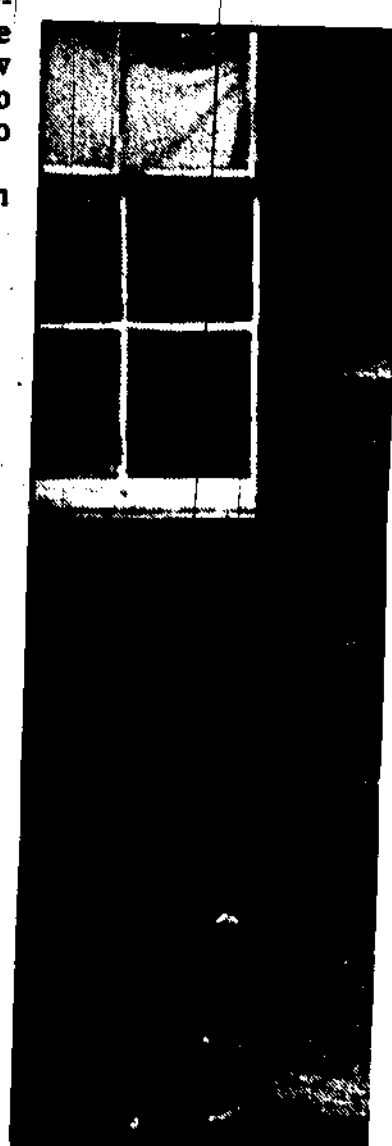
Peter Wapato, sometimes called "Chief," used the point for various activities. The point once supported a dance pavilion. He also staged celebrations and rodeos that were advertised all over the country.

"The Wapatos always were promoters," Evans said.

Early in the 1900s, he recalled, the Wapatos borrowed \$1,000 from a Chelan bank to put on a three-day rodeo in that community. The day after the event, they paid back the loan and had \$1,500 left over. They split that with the city of Chelan.

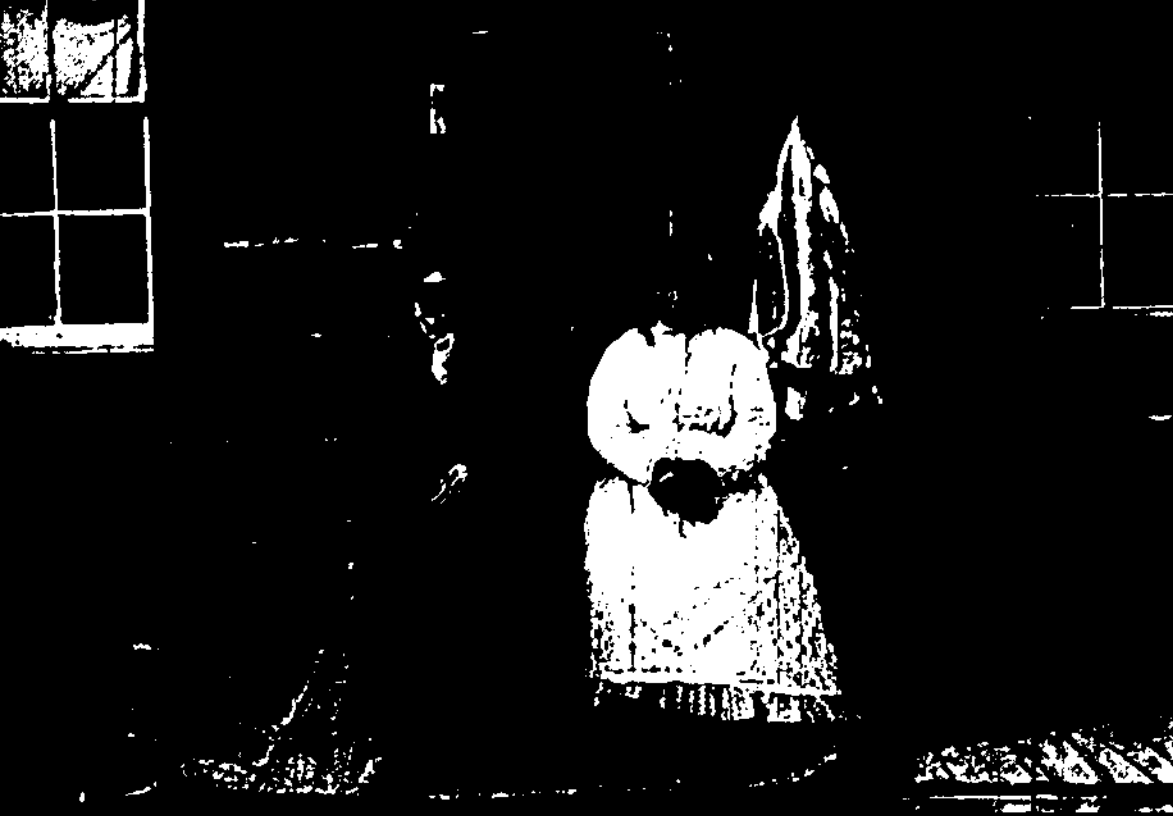
Wapato John was later associated with horse racing on the point. In an effort to revive the sport in the Lake Chelan area, he opened a half-mile exercise track for racing and rodeo shows. It closed during the Depression.

The point was always a favorite spot for picnics and camping. Two of the Indian women charged \$1.50



for overnight stays and one year, Evans recalled.

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WAPATO JOHN AND HIS WIFE IN AN OLD PICTURE

for overnight stays and made \$15,000 one year, Evans recalled.

In 1955, the Wapatos signed an agreement among themselves that they would never sell their land, only lease it. That brought the Wapato Point resort about.

To assure its orderly development, the Indians wrote into their lease contract with developers that no riprapping and pilings or other ugly man-made structures would be allowed on the point itself. The Indians want to preserve the natural

setting as much as possible. So buyers of leases of lots face restrictions.

Peter Wapato, who lived to be 100, once related to The Wenatchee World how he and his father and family went through the Ribboncliff

earthquake. The family lived in a log house with a dirt floor near the cliff. The tremor shook the roof off.

"The shake filled up the Columbia River and all one night the Columbia River was dammed," he said, speaking through his son as an interpreter. "The next morning the river went through."

He said that at Chelan Station, where springs were situated, water shot as high as the Wenatchee World building. It continued for weeks until it finally dwindled down to nothing. The mountain east of the river cracked open and black stuff oozed out of the split. Someone had the fluid examined and reported it as oil.

Only the log cabin in which Peter Wapato lived at the point remains preserved to remind people of the Wapatos. Restored, it's located in sharp contrast, near the resort swimming pool. Evans hopes to reacquire the house Wapato John lived in and return it to where it once sat, near his resort.

Evans, who with his two daughters are the lone descendants of Wapato John, hopes to see a museum erected in which the full story of his people will be preserved. A few efforts in that direction have not yet born fruit.

But the Wapatos are not being entirely forgotten here at the resort. Three clusters of condominiums have been given the Indian names of three prominent figures — Nek-quelekin, for Wapato John; Elloewe, for Louis Wapato who was Peter's son; and Yacinda, for Peter Wapato's wife.