

# Pudding River

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By Danielle Strom

One of the branches of the Willamette River, the Pudding River, runs through Clackamas and Marion Counties, and is located to the east of Salem.<sup>1</sup> It is situated in the northern Willamette Valley and is in close proximity to several large population centers in the valley.<sup>2</sup>

It was originally named *Hons-u-cha-chac* by the natives. The name derives from the name of a tribe, "*Ahantchuyuk*."<sup>3</sup> Johnson and Winter wrote that the Pudding River "rises in the Cascade Mountains and empties into the Willamette [Willamette] from the East,"<sup>4</sup> though more accurately, the stream empties into the Molalla River just before it empties into the Willamette.<sup>5</sup> The Little Pudding River, the main stems largest tributary, joins the river just west of Mt. Angel.<sup>6</sup>

The Pudding River drains an almost circular basin encompassing 530 squares miles. The River originates in the Waldo Hills and flows in a northerly direction for about 40 miles and has eight tributaries which join it before the lower reach.

The first known record of the "Pudding River" was first written down by Alexander Henry, the younger, who wrote in his journal, January 23, 1814: "At 11 AM we passed a small stream on our left called by our people, 'Pudding River.'"<sup>7</sup> Hence, the name Pudding River is one of the oldest place names in Oregon. The origin of the Pudding River's name is controversial. J. Q. Thornton thought the name was corrupted from Put-in.<sup>8</sup> Another more interesting and more widely accepted version of the origin claims that the name was bestowed by a party of hunters that consumed a blood pudding while camped on the stream:<sup>9</sup>

About the time the union between the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company was consummated (1821-22),<sup>10</sup> Joseph Gervais and Etienne Lucier, accompanied by their families, as was the custom, were camping on the *Hous-u-cha-chuck*, which was the Indian name of Pudding River, their camp being near its junction with the Willamette; while there they experienced severe weather. Accompanied with a snow storm, which confined them to their lodges until compelled to go forth in search of game. The little prairie along pudding river, where the lower Indian trail crossed the stream, was but a short distance above their camp. Here they came upon a heard of elk, some of which they succeeded in shooting. The Indian women, hearing the firing and suspecting what was going on, started with their knives and vessels to assist their liege lords of the chase. They succeeded in saving the blood, which was soon made into the favorite French dish known as blood pudding, upon which, with their elk meat, they fared sumptuously every day during the continuance of the inclement weather. While this memorable feast was being enjoyed, Gervais and Lucier christened the stream *Riviere au Boudin*, or *Pudding River*<sup>11</sup>

Today the Pudding River drains one of the richest agricultural regions in Oregon. Productive farms of grass seed, mint, corn, berries, onions, beans, wheat, nursery stock, etc. enrich both sides of the river. The drainage is also known for animal husbandry with dairy cattle, sheep, goats, and horses being found in abundance.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Lewis A McArthur, "Oregon Geographic names," *Oregon Historical Society Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (March 1927): 76-77

<sup>2</sup> Oregon. State Game Commission. Lands Division, *Master Plan for Angler Access and Associated Recreational Use: Oregon Beaches and Estuaries* (Oregon: Oregon State Game Commission, Lands Division, 1967-1971), 1

<sup>3</sup> Ray H Glassley, "Letter to the Editor," *Oregon Historical Society Quarterly* 59, no. 3 (September 1958): 256

<sup>4</sup> Overton Johnson and Wm H Winter, "Route across the rocky mountains with a description of Oregon and California, etc, 1843," *Oregon Historical Society Quarterly* 7, no. 2 (June 1906): 164

<sup>5</sup> Fred S. Perrine, "Early days on the Willamette," *Oregon Historical Society Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (December 1924): 308

<sup>6</sup> Lewis A McArthur, "Oregon Geographic names," *Oregon Historical Society Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (March 1927): 76-77

<sup>7</sup> Robert Horace Down, *A History of the Silverton Country* (Portland, Or: Berncliff Press, 1926), 55

<sup>8</sup> Robert Horace Down, *A History of the Silverton Country* (Portland, Or: Berncliff Press, 1926), 55

<sup>9</sup> Robert Horace Down, *A History of the Silverton Country* (Portland, Or: Berncliff Press, 1926), 55

<sup>10</sup> Lewis McArthur notes that Rees is accurate regarding the naming of the river, but wrong about the date. The date of the naming of the Pudding River probably occurred in late 1812 or early 1813. The fur trader Alexander Henry records the name Pudding River in his diary on January 23, 1814

<sup>11</sup> Lewis A McArthur, "Oregon Geographic names," *Oregon Historical Society Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (March 1927): 76-77