Surprisingly few people who are born and live at the Southern end of what is now called Puget Sound know the origins of the local place-names and alternate names by which many features have been and are known. Some of the confusion may come from changes in language or terrain since names were first applied: what was called a "slough" for example when first named by Europeans 150 years ago, may have been filled in more recently. Such words can also lose meaning in translation as people from one place move to another; common words can have different, though related meanings in various locales. Finally, the local area has extensive Anglicization of indigenous names, many of which refer to features, persons or historical events that were poorly or not at all understood by the Americans and Europeans. A quick local history and survey of some local toponyms demonstrates the rich heritage of this region.

Puget Sound was once called "*Whulge*[*][i]" by the Coast Salish at the southern end of the Sound. Inlets and many creeks and rivers were generally known by the names of the permanent villages found near the head. Many features were given names that were useful in navigating the waters, because the Coast Salish peoples used water for most transportation (čəƛ̕əłiw̓qʷ "rocky point"). Other names indicated the type of food, the quality of the fresh

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[*] Carpenter, Fort Nisqually, p 1   This is a Whulshootseed word, the southern dialect of the Coast Salish language, Lushootseed. Words from this language will be anglicized when possible to aid in pronunciation, and indicated by italics. Where available, the correct spelling using the International Phonetic Alphabet and the meaning of the name will be supplied in Appendix B. *addendum* 18 May: According to Zalmai Zahir this is the word for "salt water:" x̌ʷəlč

water on land or the types of plants that grew in abundance (xʷəłqʷuʔ no fresh water- place on Hartstene Island; ʔulalac cattails – place on Budd Inlet). A few colorful names were applied from their history or mythology, such as x̌ʷayucx̌ʷaʔ kʷədup which means "Basket Ogress was here." It refers to a small stretch of coastline along Gallagher Cove on Totten Inlet.

Europeans were the first known non-indigenous people to venture into Puget Sound, most famously George Vancouver's mapping expedition (1792) which applied a vast number of European names to local features, with no knowledge of the indigenous peoples' own names. Among the local places named by Capt. Vancouver and his crew are Puget Sound and Hood Canal, Deception Pass, and Mt. Olympus. Previous Europeans along the Pacific Northwest Coast included Perez (1774), Meares (1785), Narvaez (1789) and Eliza, the last naming what is still called Port Angeles in 1791. Most of the previous expeditions had focused on the areas to the north of the Strait of Juan de Fuca (named for an early, possibly fictitious, sailor), never going far into what is now called Puget Sound. The last big naval mapping expedition was that of the American, Lieutenant Charles Wilkes in 1841.   He sailed furthest, to the southern end of the Sound, scrupulously mapping the shorelines and naming most of the landmarks that didn't already have European labels. Following custom, many of the names he applied were inspired by his crew.

European trappers and traders arrived in the 1830s, generally attached to the Hudson's Bay Company which set up forts along the Columbia River at Fort Vancouver (19 March 1825)[ii] and another on the high bluff to the north of the Nisqually River Delta, Fort Nisqually (established 30 May 1833, first building was a storehouse, completed 1832)[iii].

The Nisqually glacier, river and delta are named for the indigenous people who

originally settled the area. One group of people were called "*Squallyabsch,*[a]" which means

"people of the grass country." However, as with all local peoples who were aligned by culture

more than politics, they generally referred to themselves by and identified with the names of

their villages. "Tribes" on the shores of Puget Sound did not operate in the same way as other

areas in the United States where each tribe had a clearly defined hierarchy and spokespeople

and generally covered many villages. This caused difficulties for the Europeans and

Americans when trying to determine borders and establish treaties. The people who actually

inhabited the area of the Nisqually Delta came from a village called *Sequalitchew*[iv]. Their

village was on a small creek just northeast of the Nisqually River, below the bluffs.

The settlements followed a basic settlement pattern with trappers and traders arriving

first, and missionaries preceding or soon following the first wave of permanent settlers.

Methodists arrived at Ft. Nisqually on 10 April 1839, Catholics were an intermittent presence

until they settled near Olympia in 1848[v]. The establishment of the Hudson's Bay Company

post at Fort Nisqually provided a small measure of security for settlers, and an easy way to

receive goods and supplies.

The first settlers with families came with the Michael T. Simmons and George

Washington Bush party in 1845. They settled the prairie to the south of the mouth of the

Deschutes River. This prairie is now called Bush Prairie. The settlement itself was originally

called Newmarket, but was later renamed Tumwater, for the river which was called "*TE'm-wata*" in Chinook Jargon (not a Lushootseed dialect)[vi].

Roman Catholic priests soon established a mission at the site of the modern-day Priest

Point Park with the help of Simmons and other settlers. The Oblates of Mary Immaculate

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[a]   Carpenter, p. 17.

arrived in Budd Inlet in 1848, and received help from Newmarket settlers Simmons and

Crockett to build their mission at what became known as Priest's Point. The official name for

the mission was St. Joseph's of New Market.

Olympia itself is named for the Olympic mountains, renamed from Smithville, which

itself replaced the name "Smithter" developed from the names of Edmund Sylvester and L.L.

Smith, early settlers. This town was located in the general vicinity of the former Coast Salish

village of *Bus-chut-whud*[β], sometimes translated "place that has black bears.[#]" The Olympic

mountains were so named by Capt. Meares in 1778 for the Greek home of the gods, but had

been earlier named El Cerro de Santa Rosalia by Perez.

Early settlers in the Olympia area who gave their names to roads, parks and other

features include: J.N. Ellison and J.J. Brenner, oystermen; Woodruff, a local developer; Capt

and Mrs. S.W. Percival, who owned at mill on Percival Creek; H.L. Butler, and O.C. Lacey, an

attorney who filed an application for incorporation of "Woodland" then substituted his own

name when the first was rejected. Tolmie state park, to the west of the Nisqually delta, is

named for Dr. William Fraser Tolmie of the Hudson's Bay Company, who brought medicines

and the (then) new cowpox vaccine to Fort Nisqually in the mid-1800s.

More recent growth led to fanciful names such as "Holiday Valley" a development in

the toward the west of Thurston County and "Tanglewilde", in Lacey. Other names bestowed

in the latter part of the last century include: Capital High School, the Evergreen State College,

Olympia Technical College (now re-named South Puget Sound Community College), and

Airdustrial Way (which has recently been renamed Tumwater Blvd), the last name a relic of

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β   Waterman has this as B l s-tcɛ'txûd (p 309). See Appendix B, under the entry bəsčətxʷəd

Zalmai Zahir, in lecture on 18 May 2009 says that Olympia was called "*steh-chass*" which is the sound of one rock
    hitting another, as interpreted by the Chehalis people (not a Coast Salish word).

the hopeful period of growth in the 1960s and 70s. More practical names are found too, some old and some newer: Westbay and Eastbay Drives, Tumwater Valley, and Olympia Airport. Finally, some names, though "official," never really stick. Though William Winlock Miller High School has been in existence for over 100 years, locals call it Olympia High School, and probably always will, despite sincere attempts to enshrine the benefactor's name on the institution.

Names and their changes reflect the realities of life: people come and go, fads and materials wax and wane. What is considered exciting and new at one point in time can later on become confusing or outdated, as in the case of Airdustrial Way, mentioned above. Names that were once firmly tied to a purpose can seem awkward when a change in fortune occurs; the former brewery in Tumwater stands as a ghostly example, now derelict and lacking a new purpose by which to rename it. And sometimes, a name that has changed doesn't catch on, as was the case when the Decker family sold their small grocery store along Steamboat Island Road. For many years afterward, one could tell how recently a person had arrived in the neighborhood by whether they called it "Decker's" or "the General Store."[vii]

The measure of a name is perhaps, its endurance: names that are common or popular now can be changed or forgotten as people move in and out and political power shifts. New technologies, new events and new heros can spur changes or inspire new trends as names are needed. But some names survive through time and cultural changes: Squaxin, Nisqually, Puget Sound. The history of toponyms reveals the history of place and people.

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Endnotes

i   Zalmai Zahir, lecture to class "Ecology of Language and Place" 18 May 2009

ii   Troxel, p 12

iii Troxel, p 21

iv Carpenter, <u>Fort Nisqually</u> and Waterman, p 328

v   Troxel, p 117

vi Waterman, p 306

vii Personal knowledge, K. Stidham