

REPORT  
OF  
UNITED STATES GEOGRAPHIC BOARD

ON  
S. J. Res. 64

A JOINT RESOLUTION TO CHANGE THE NAME OF  
"MOUNT RAINIER" TO "MOUNT TACOMA"  
AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES



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REPORT  
UNITED STATES GEOGRAPHIC BOARD

COMMITTEE ON THE PUBLIC LANDS

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SIXTY-EIGHTH CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

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[S. J. Res. 64, Sixty-eighth Congress, first session]

In the House of Representatives, April 22, 1924. Referred to the Committee on the Public Lands

**JOINT RESOLUTION TO CHANGE THE NAME OF "MOUNT RAINIER" TO "MOUNT TACOMA," AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

Whereas it is the universal practice, out of respect for the American Indian, to perpetuate, wherever possible, in the geographical nomenclature of the United States the names used by the American Indians; and

Whereas the man for whom Mount Rainier was named, as the commander of a British ship, engaged in depredations along the Atlantic seaboard in armed opposition to the Government of the United States; and

Whereas perpetuating the name "Rainier" is contrary to the wishes of the sovereign State of Washington, as expressed in a memorial passed by the legislature of said State in the session of 1917 and addressed to the members of the United States Geographic Board, petitioning the board to substitute for the name "Rainier" the most appropriate name that the board might, after a hearing, select: Therefore be it .

*Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,* That from and after the passage of this resolution the mountain heretofore known as "Mount Rainier," the national park heretofore known as "Mount Rainier National Park," and the national forest heretofore known as "Rainier National Forest," shall be known and designated on the public records as "Mount Tacoma," "Mount Tacoma National Park," and "Tacoma National Forest," respectively.

SEC. 2. That all records, surveys, maps, and public documents of the United States in which such mountain, park, or forest is mentioned or referred to under the name of "Mount Rainier," "Mount Rainier National Park," or "Rainier National Forest," respectively, shall be held to refer to such mountain, park, or forest under and by the name of "Mount Tacoma," "Mount Tacoma National Park," and "Tacoma National Forest," respectively.

Passed the Senate April 21, 1924.

Attest:

GEORGE A. SANDERSON, *Secretary.*

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

UNITED STATES GEOGRAPHIC BOARD,  
*Washington, June 4, 1924.*

Hon. N. J. SINNOTT,  
*Chairman Committee on the Public Lands,  
House of Representatives.*

DEAR SIR: In compliance with your request of May 21, I transmit herewith a report from the United States Geographic Board on the subject of the proposed change of name of Mount Rainier to Mount Tacoma.

This report was adopted to-day by a unanimous vote against the proposed change.

The Geographic Board consists of 14 officers of the Government, appointed by the President of the United States, and representing the following bureaus and departments:

Coast and Geodetic Survey.  
Department of Agriculture.  
Department of State.  
Forest Service.  
General Land Office.  
Geological Survey.  
Government Printing Office.  
Hydrographic Office, Navy Department.  
Lighthouse Bureau.  
Post Office Department.  
Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of Ethnology.  
Treasury Department.  
War Department, General Staff.

I beg to call your attention to the fact that this is the fourth time during the past 34 years in which the Geographic Board has been called upon to decide whether or not there is any justification in the proposition to change the established name of Mount Rainier to Mount Tacoma, and in each case has decided most emphatically against any change.

Very truly yours,

C. HART MERRIAM,  
*Chairman United States Geographic Board.*

## REPORT OF UNITED STATES GEOGRAPHIC BOARD ON THE NAME OF MOUNT RAINIER

Mount Rainier was discovered March 8, 1792 by the eminent geographer and explorer, Capt. George Vancouver, and was named by him in honor of Rear Admiral Peter Rainier of the British Navy.<sup>1</sup> For a century and a quarter the name "Mount Rainier" has been on every important map of western America, regardless of where issued, and during the same period has appeared in all important geographies, atlases, histories, and encyclopaedias, and all official documents relating to the Pacific coast region, whether published in the United State, Canada, England, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Holland, Russia, or Arabia.

In the words of the late Prof. George Davidson, foremost geographer of the Pacific coast region "Vancouver's names upon this western coast are part of the history of geographic discovery and exploration," and they have been accepted by the geographers of all nations. For, as stated before this board by Victor Farrar, a student of history: Vancouver's "right to name the mountain is well attested by the fact that since 1792 [the year of its discovery] no geographer of any nationality has ever challenged the name."

No geographic feature in any part of the world can claim a name more firmly fixed—fixed by right of discovery, by right of priority, by right of international usage, and by the conspicuous place it holds in the literature, atlases, and official charts of the civilized nations of the earth.

To change it would be a blow to the stability of geographic and historical nomenclature, and a reflection upon the intelligence of the American people. The name has become the property of the world and is no more a local matter than the name of the Andes of South America or the Himalaya of India. Think of the chaos in geography, history, and science that would result if new names were given to the world's most prominent landmarks.

The records of science in the field of geology and in studies of glaciers, mammals, birds, reptiles, insects, forests, and humbler plants contain thousands of references to Mount Rainier, and our museums include thousands of specimens whose labels bear the name. And such records and specimens are by no means confined to our own country, for they are to be found also in the literature and the

<sup>1</sup> See "Voyage of Discovery to the North Pacific Ocean," by Capt. George Vancouver, vol. 1, pp. 253, 259, 268, 1st ed., London, 1798. Also French edition, vol. 1, p. 277, Paris, 1799. Name "Mount Rainier" in text and on charts in atlas of both English and French editions.

museums of most of the countries of Europe. Imagine the confusion a change in the name of the mountain would cause after the present controversy has been forgotten!

#### THE DEMAND FOR CHANGE OF NAME

Beginning with the year 1883 and continuing to the present day, a majority of the people of Tacoma have been striving to bring about a change in the name of the great mountain, wishing to replace the old-established name "Rainier" by that of their own city. At first the movement lacked impetus, but in the course of a few years it became general and an association was formed for the specific purpose of financing and directing an active, aggressive campaign. By means of personal appeal, newspaper and magazine articles, and public lectures all parts of the United States were reached, and many people were led to believe that the proposed change should be made. Furthermore, during the past 34 years the people of Tacoma have sent three delegations to Washington (in 1890, 1917, and again in 1921) in the hope of influencing the United States Geographic Board to make the change. Having failed, they are now appealing to Congress.

Advocates of the name "Tacoma" are continually calling attention to the number of patriotic and other organizations favoring the name "Tacoma." But no mention is made of the insidious way in which these organizations have been misled to believe that "Tacoma" is the aboriginal distinctive name of the mountain.<sup>2</sup>

#### ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF TACOMA

Examination of the evidence presented at the hearings in favor of the name "Tacoma," together with a careful reading of many published articles on the subject brings out the fact that only two arguments have been brought forward by supporters of the change. These are:

- (1) That "Tacoma" is the aboriginal Indian name of the Mountain;
- (2) That the man Peter Rainier for whom the mountain was named was an enemy to our country.

#### THE FACTS IN THE CASE

In reply to these statements the United States Geographic Board presents the following:

1. *The Name "Tacoma"*.—Names more or less similar to "Tacoma"—as "Takoha," "Tah-ho-ma," "Ta-gho-ma," "Takob," "Tahko-bed," "Tahch-ho-bet," "Dacobed," and others—were applied by the tribes of the region to all lofty snow-clad peaks from Mount

<sup>2</sup>Some of the appeals, while misleading are couched in dignified language; others contradict one another and abound in false information, and a few—notably a small pamphlet by S. H. McKown entitled "The Violence Done by Perpetuating the Name 'Mount Rainier,'" a second edition of which was issued in Tacoma early in the present year—are not only untruthful but scurrilous.

Baker on the British Columbia boundary south to Mount Hood in Oregon.<sup>2</sup>

Years ago Dr. George Otis Smith, Director of the United States Geological Survey, called attention to the fact that an old international boundary map on file in the Department of State shows the name "Ta-ho-ma" on Mount Baker close to the boundary between British Columbia and Washington. And the same name (or one of its variants) has been applied by the native Indians not only to Mounts Baker and Rainier, but also to Mount Adams, Mount St. Helens, Mount Hood, and other high peaks—each tribe calling the snow mountain in its neighborhood by the name which in its language means "the white mountain."

Senator Dill in his report to the Senate (Rept. No. 268, Calendar No. 283, 58th Cong., 1st sess.) repeated a published statement that the name "Tacoma" "means the mountain that was God." Nothing could be further from the truth, the name (in its several forms) meaning simply "white mountain."

2. *The man Rainier.*—Peter Rainier, whose grandfather was a French Huguenot, was born at Sandwich, England, and when a lad of about 15 years (in 1756) entered the British Navy. On May 26, 1768, he was promoted to the rank of lieutenant, and on May 3, 1777, was placed in command of the sloop *Ostrich*. On July 8 of the following year, during the Revolutionary War, after a severe struggle he captured an American privateer. He was severely wounded in the breast by a musket ball, but refused to be taken below until he had captured the enemy's vessel, thus proving himself a brave and valorous officer, deserving the honors that were bestowed upon him. In 1795 he was made rear admiral and in 1804 advanced to the highest rank—Admiral of the Blue. In 1807 he was elected to Parliament, and at his death left a tenth of his property toward the extinguishment of the national debt.<sup>4</sup> Is not this sufficient answer to the claim that he was "an obscure person"?

It is charged that Rainier believed in slavery, and that in the War of the Revolution he was an enemy of the United States. Both of these charges appear to be true. Is it not true also that many of our highest officers and other prominent men of the time were slave-

<sup>2</sup>The Indian names applied to the several lofty snow peaks of the Cascade Range from British Columbia south to Oregon may be arranged in two categories according to the dialectic differences in the languages of the tribes. Thus in one series the last syllable has the "mah" sound while in the other it has the sound of "bet" ("pet" or "bed"), as shown in the following lists:

Tacobah.	Dacobed.
Tahoba.	Tacobed.
T'choba.	Tacobet.
T'chakoba.	Ta-ho-bet.
Ta'ch-ho-ma.	Tah -ho-bet.
Tah -ho-mah.	Tah-ko-bed.
Tachkoma.	Ta-ko-bid.
Ta-gho-ma.	Tah-koh-bud.
Tah-hoh-mah.	Tacoh.
T'koma.	T'kope.
Tak-ho-ma.	

(The spellings here given are those of the various authors. There are one or two others—as "Ta-koman" or "Tak-ho-man" which are not well allocated.)

<sup>4</sup>E. S. Meany, "Vancouver's Discovery of Puget Sound," pp. 100-101. The Macmillan Co., London and New York, 1915.

holders? And is it a fair charge against Rainier that in the service of his country he proved a brave and patriotic officer?<sup>5</sup>

#### HISTORY OF THE USE OF THE WORD "TACOMA"

So far as known to us the earliest written use of the name "Tahoma," "Tah-ko-bed," or any related word, irrespective of spelling, was its appearance, already referred to, on an old unpublished map showing the location of the international boundary between British Columbia and the State of Washington. The date of this map has not been ascertained, but it antedates most of the settlement of the region. It was discovered in the State Department and photographs were furnished to Dr. George Otis Smith, Director of the United States Geological Survey, who in 1901 was in charge of the investigation of the northwestern boundary of the United States. In examining the map Doctor Smith was surprised to find the Indian name "Ta-ho-ma" on Mount Baker in addition to its English name.

The next written use of the name and the first in the form "Tacoma" was in 1863 in a book by Theodore Winthrop, entitled "Canoe and Saddle." Winthrop stated that it was a generic term applied to Mount Rainier and also "to all snow peaks."

In 1866, three years after its publication by Winthrop, the name was adopted as the title of a Good Templar lodge at Olympia, and two years later was given the embryo town since known as Tacoma, which had been entered on the original survey as "Commencement City."

In 1876 Gen. Hazard Stevens stated in an article in the Atlantic Monthly that "'Tak-homa' or 'Tahoma' among the Yakimas, Klickitats, Puyallups, Nisquallys, and allied tribes of Indians is the generic term for [snow] mountain."

The movement to change the name of Mount Rainier originated, as everybody knows, in the city of Tacoma, and in the year 1883. In that year the officials of the Northern Pacific Railroad announced that in their guide books and other publications the name "Mount Tacoma" would be used in place of "Mount Rainier." During the ensuing year the new name was generally adopted by the people of Tacoma. In fact, the enthusiasm over it was so marked that the people proposed its adoption in place of "Washington" as the name of their State, then about to be admitted into the Union.

In 1889 a Tacoma lawyer and historian, Ellwood Evans, in his "Hishtory of the Pacific Northwest," made the statement that "the railroad company renamed the mountain after the city." And in 1893 C. G. Brewerton, in his "History of Washington, the Evergreen State," explained that the name "Rainier" "was generally accepted by early settlers up to the time of the completion of the Northern Pacific to Tacoma; then, renaming the mountain after the city, the

<sup>5</sup>The maliciously false charge that he "ravaged our coasts, burnt our towns," and so on, is on a par with the accusation that the U. S. Geographic Board rendered its first decision for the perpetuation of the established name as a return for a carload of Rainier beer, the obvious fact being that the date of the decision (1890) was four years previous to the first appearance of the beverage in question. And it may not be amiss to add that among the eminent men against whom this slander is directed were Henry Gannett, then chief geographer of the Geological Survey; Marcus Baker, of the Geological and Coast Surveys; Thomas Mendenhall, then head of the Coast and Geodetic Survey; and Richardson Clover, then Chief Hydrographer of the Navy, later admiral. All are now dead.



company called it Mount Tacoma." But later, even the Northern Pacific Railroad abandoned its claim, announcing frankly: "We have carried this farce as far as we are going to for advertising purposes. The name has been officially declared to be 'Rainier,' and that is what we shall call it."

When Senator Dill presented his report from the Committee on Public Lands, recommending the passage of the joint resolution to change the name of the mountain, he was asked if such change was desired by the people of the State of Washington. In reply he said that the Legislature of Washington had requested that the name be changed.

The action of the legislature referred to was a resolution adopted in the early spring of 1917, concerning which a few words of explanation seem proper. William Bishop, for 10 years a member of the Washington State Legislature, and serving at the time of the passage of the resolution, stated plainly: "The real sentiment of both houses was opposed to the passage of the memorial asking for the change of name \* \* \* its passage was secured through the powerful influence of the speaker of the house, who was from Tacoma, and the president of the senate, who was from Tacoma. Their influence, through the chairmen of the various committees whom they had appointed, absolutely controlled." And it may be added that the then governor of the State was likewise a resident of Tacoma and had been for many years.

In addition to the fact that both the president of the senate and the speaker of the house and also the governor were from Tacoma, a Tacoma lobbyist (S. W. Wall) after visiting many of the members of the legislature at their homes, went to the capitol and remained during a considerable part of the session, working for the resolution, which after being once defeated was finally passed.

One of the leading newspapers of the West, the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, under date of April 21, 1917, said in a leading editorial: "It is of course possible to decree that henceforth the name of the mountain shall be 'Mount Tacoma,' or 'Mount Somethingelse.' But no decree can make people use the name. It will still be 'Mount Rainier' in speech and in the written word." The same is true to-day.

#### THE SPECIFIC NAME OF MOUNT RAINIER

Each of the several tribes of Indians living in the adjacent region has a definite specific name for the great mountain. This, according to the dialect of the tribe speaking, is "P'sk-houks" (usually written "Puskehouse"), "Tu-ah-ku," or "Tiswauk" (otherwise written "Chis-wauk," "Stiquak," and "Twahwauk"). These are distinctive names, applied to Rainier and no other mountain. And still the people of Tacoma ask for "the restoration of the original and rightful name of the mountain!" But this is exactly what they do not want; they want the name of their city.

#### PROPORTIONATE OCCURRENCE OF THE NAMES "RAINIER" AND "TACOMA" IN PRINTED WORKS

An examination of the literature relating to the northwest coast region in general and to the State of Washington in particular, was

made several years ago under the direction of the United States Geographic Board, for the purpose of ascertaining the relative frequency of occurrence of the names "Mount Rainier" and "Mount Tacoma" in histories, guides, books on travel and exploration, scientific publications, and magazine articles; and also in the standard dictionaries, encyclopedias, gazetteers, and atlases of the world. This inquiry developed the following facts:

(1) Apart from documents and folders treating of or emanating from the city of Tacoma more than 90 per cent use the name "Mount Rainier" exclusively.

(2) In the bibliography of Washington Geology and Geography, published by the State of Washington in 1913, 47 publications on Mount Rainier are enumerated, 46 of which use the name "Rainier," and 1 the name "Tacoma."

(3) In the publications of the western societies of mountain climbers—the Sierra Club of California, the Mazamas of Oregon, the Mountaineers of Washington—and in the official Government publications relating to Mount Rainier National Park, the name "Mount Rainier" is used exclusively.

(4) Of 10 standard dictionaries, encyclopedias, and gazetteers consulted 1 gives preference to "Tacoma"; all others give "Rainier" either exclusively or followed by the word "Tacoma" in parentheses.

(5) Of 13 standard atlases of recent date, 9 use the name "Mount Rainier" exclusively, while 4 give "Rainier" followed by "Tacoma" in parentheses. Not one gives preference to "Tacoma."

(6) Of 17 foreign atlases consulted in the Library of Congress, all without exception use the name "Mount Rainier."

To the foregoing list of titles the following should be added:

#### GAZETTEERS

*Rainier oder Tachoma.*—Ritter's "Geographisch-Statistisches Lexikon," 9th edition, Vienna, 1910.

*Rainier (Rainier, Tacoma, or Tachoma), Mount.*—"Longman's Gazetteer of the World," London, 1920.

*Rainier (or Tacoma), Mount.*—Lippincott's "Gazetteer of the World," Philadelphia, 1922.

#### ATLASES

*Mt. Rainier.*—The "Times Atlas and Gazetteer of the World," London, 1922.

*Mt. Rainier.*—"Atlas Universel de Géographie," Paris, 1923.

*M. Rainier.*—"Grande Atlante Geografico" (Baratta-Visintin), Novara, 1922.

*Mt. Rainier.*—Andree's "Allgemeine Handatlas," 8th edition, Leipzig, 1922.

\*Those using "Mount Rainier" exclusively are: Stanford's London Atlas of Universal Geography, 1904; Stieler's Hand-Atlas, Gotha, 1905; Andree's Handatlas, Leipzig, 1881 and 1907; Rand McNally Commercial Atlas of America, 1917; Atlas of World Commerce, Edinburgh Geog. Inst., 1907; Velhagen & Klasing's Kleiner Handatlas, 1917; Debes, Neuer Handatlas, Leipzig, 1914; Schrader, Atlas de Géographie Moderne, 1915; Petri & Shokalsky Russian Atlas, 1913.

†Those using "Mount Rainier" first, followed by "Mount Tacoma" in parentheses are Century Atlas, 1914; Cram's Atlas of the World, 1916; Hammond's Standard Atlas of the World, 1914 and 1917; Walker's New International Atlas, 1915.

‡Fifteen of these are in foreign languages, as follows: German: Stieler, Hand-Atlas, Gotha, 1905; Andree's Handatlas, Leipzig, 1881 and 1907; Debes, Neuer Handatlas, Leipzig, 1914; Velhagen & Klasing's Kleiner Handatlas, Leipzig, 1917. French: Schrader, Atlas de Géographie Moderne, Paris, 1915; Atlas Larousse, illustre, Paris [1899]. Italian: Borghi, B. Atlante general, Firenze, 1819; Zerolo, Elias, Atlas Geografico Universal, Paris, 1904; Pennesi, G. Atlante scolastico per la Geografia, Roma, 1894. Spanish: Portulano de la America Setentrional, Madrid, 1869; Atlas de las Cinco Partes del Mundo, Madrid [19—]. Dutch: Kuyper, J. Nieuwe atlas der wereld, Amsterdam, 1864. Belgian: Vandermaelen, Atlas Universal, Bruxelles, 1827. Russian: Petri & Shokalsky [Large general table atlas], St. Petersburg, 1913. Arabic (transliterated): Atlas al mejma' khartat resm al-arz, Malta, 1835.

## OTHER ENGLISH NAMES

It has been pointed out by Dr. George Otis Smith and others that no protest from the people of Tacoma has been discovered against any of the other names bestowed by Vancouver at the time he named Mount Rainier, although several of these—as Puget Sound, Mount Baker, Port Orchard, and Whidbey Island—were named for British officers on his own ship. Among the additional names given by Vancouver in honor of Englishmen are Bellingham Bay, Penn Cove, Vashon Island, and Port Townsend.

And if our sense of patriotism should lead us to cancel English place names because we were once at war with England, would not the map of the United States look like a skinned cat? And who would undertake the task of renaming the hundreds of cities, towns, and geographic features thus bereft of their titles from Cambridge and Mount Vernon in the East to Bellingham and Puget Sound in the West?

## COST OF CHANGE OF NAME

Has the cost of the proposed change been considered—the cost to the Government of reengraving and reprinting the maps and official documents on which the name occurs, as published by the United States Geological Survey, the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey, the War Department, the Hydrographic Office of the Navy, the Forest Service, the Biological Survey, the National Parks Service, the General Land Office of the Department of the Interior, the Post Office Department, and the Department of Agriculture? And aside from the expense of changes in Government maps and documents, what justification could be offered for the alterations that would be required in the multitude of maps, guide books, histories, school readers, and other publications of prominent business firms, the aggregate cost of which would reach appalling figures?

If the present Congress should change the name, is it not extremely probable, owing to the rapidly increasing protests from the great majority of citizens of Washington and other States, that during the next Congress a counterresolution would be introduced, changing it back to "Rainier"?

Recapitulating, it appears:

1. That the name "Tacoma" in this form is not strictly an Indian word of the Northwest, but seems to be derived from a number of more or less similar words used by the Indians of the region as a generic term, meaning "white mountain," and applied to all snow peaks of the Cascade Range from British Columbia to Oregon. It is not, in any of its forms, the distinctive name of any mountain.

2. That Peter Rainier, for whom the mountain was named, instead of being "an obscure person," was a valiant officer who attained the highest rank in the British Navy.

3. That the clamor for substituting "Tacoma" for "Rainier" as the name of the mountain arose in and is continually fomented by a group of citizens of the city of Tacoma.

4. That by means of propaganda emanating from Tacoma and carried on over a series of years, consisting of personal argument

and correspondence, newspaper and magazine articles, lectures, and appeals to patriotic and historical societies and women's clubs, hundreds of people have been misled to believe that the change ought to be made.

5. That the agitation begun and so persistently carried on by this one city—as against the rest of the world—threatens one of the most firmly established names on the face of the earth and if successful would deal a death blow to the stability of international geographic nomenclature.

C. HART MERRIAM, *Chairman.*  
JAS. McCORMICK, *Secretary.*